

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 1, No. 3 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be June 1995

Why are there Divisions in the Church?

Undoubtedly, you've often wondered about all the differences and divisions in the church—about all the splits, schisms, and conflicting doctrines. Christians don't agree on the nature of man, the nature of God, or even what their reward is. Local congregations and worldwide movements alike are plagued with factions and controversies.

Of course there are many denominations that solve the problem of divisions by claiming that they alone are the **one true church**. They scoff at all the schisms in other churches until they, too, eventually become riddled with disagreements and splits!

Why?! If the same holy spirit is leading Christians into truth—why can't we all get along? Why doesn't God show us exactly what we should believe so we can all agree? Or must we throw up our hands in disillusionment and say, "I guess the church has simply lost its way—it's hopelessly divided!"

But Jesus promised that He would build His church, that He would always be with it, that the gates of **hades** would not overcome it! And He is still on His throne—ruling the church—and **allowing divisions for very important reasons!**

To understand the current state of the church, we must first of all recognize that not all who claim to be Christian are Christian. Just because an organization (or a person) claims to be doing God's work means nothing. Jesus predicted that **many** (not a few) would come in His name and

God's True Church

In this time of turmoil, many people are asking questions such as: Whom do we trust? Which Church should we join? Which groups is God working with?

Let's tackle that question by redetermining just what, why and where is God's true Church.

What? The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, meaning "assembly" or "called out ones." God selected and called out those who make up his true church.

Jesus stated, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..."

(John 6:44). Ephesians 1:22-23 states that

"...the church, which is His [Christ's] body..." This is

repeated in other passages. "...Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (Eph 5:23).

"...the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church" (Col

1:24). We also see that Christ is the head of that body. "And He is the head of the body, the church..." (Col 1:18).

So we see that God's called out people form the church, which is Christ's body, of which Christ is the head. Ephesians 5:29 tells us how Christ cares for that body, "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."

Why? God's first called out are to become kings and priests in the coming Kingdom of God (Rev 5:10). 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 states, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we will judge angels?" If we are to be kings, priests and judges, we must know God's law in order to do so. Therefore, we are also called to learn God's government.

Where? God's church is where the

Why So Many Groups?

"For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you." —1Cor 11:19

This scripture has been understood by many of the Eternal's people. The author of the article at left has been teaching Sabbath-keeping congregations independently of the Worldwide Church of God for 20 years. He is now the principal of a Sabbath-keeping boarding high school. The author of the article at right studies the Bible frequently, but has attended Sabbath keeping congregations for only 18 months and has been baptized only one year.

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Sources of Bible Information

Although, *Friends of the Brethren's* goal is to make a wide variety of Bible literature available free of charge, we will only distribute a tiny fraction of the thousands of worthwhile Biblical books and periodicals available today. Below, we list a number of organizations that we believe produce useful information. While most of their literature has a price, some groups will send it free to those in need. *Friends of the Brethren* receives no benefit from these organizations, but lists them because they may be helpful to our readers growth.

Giving & Sharing PO Box 100 Neck City, MO 64849

Giving & Sharing is a non-profit mail order bookstore serving Sabbath-keepers around the world. They carry most Bibles and religious books in print. They have a two-page order form listing many hard-to-find items of particular interest to Sabbath-keepers such as *History of True Religion* by Dugger & Dodd, Hislop's *The Two Babylons*, and Bacchiocchi's *Sabbath to Sunday*.

Their goals are: (1) distribute Bibles, religious books and articles at the lowest possible cost, (2) promote the Good News of the Kingdom, observance of Biblical Law regarding the Sabbath, Holy Days, tithing, healing, health, marriage and family, and

(3) oppose eating unclean meats, observing holidays of pagan origin, divorce, and sexual perversions.

They distribute free Bible studies and a newsletter.

Bible Sabbath Association Rt 1 Box 222 Fairview, OK 73737

This organization has members from many different Sabbath-keeping groups. They produce the Sabbath Sentinel, a 6-issue-per-year magazine, covering a variety of doctrinal issues as well as articles helping Sabbath-keepers cope with today's trying times.

Bible Sabbath Association offers about a dozen books and booklets about the Sabbath, some appropriate for teaching people that are just learn-

ing about the Sabbath. Also, they publish a directory of Sabbath-keeping organizations.

Bible Educational Services PO Box 736 Troy, OH 45373

This organization sells books, booklets, tapes, videos, and other items of interest to Sabbath-keepers. Their prices tend to be higher for similar items offered by Giving and Sharing, but they offer some items not available through Giving and Sharing. Some of their videos are designed to help children resist the pagan influences in our schools and society.

In Transition PO Box 450 Monroe, IN 46772

This is a 16-page, 6-issues-per-year newspaper covering events in the United, Global, International, and other major "Church of God" organizations. It also contains sermon summaries and articles by various teachers in these groups. However, it is not controlled by any one of these organizations and appears to be a fine source of news.

The first three issues were dated May 5, May 26, and June 23, 1995. They contained the information on the formation of the United Church of God, as well as the Articles of incorporation and bylaws of some of these corporations. Lists of ministers moving to new areas were also included.

The paper devotes some space to issues of general interest to all Sabbath-keepers. We particularly enjoyed an article in the second issue about the lives of Ukrainian Sabbath-keepers behind the iron curtain.

Send \$10 to the above address for a subscription.

Vol. 1, No. 3 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be June 1995

Servants News is published monthly by *Friends of the Brethren*. Subscriptions are free to individuals interested in obeying their Creator as described in His Word. We believe His law is the basis for living a life that is pleasing to Him in harmony with our neighbors. We believe the holy spirit gives us the power to live such a life as long as we continually repent of our sins and accept the salvation provided through our Messiah and Savior. We believe in living "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Deut 8:3).

We believe the gospel should be given freely: you may copy any or all of this publication and give it to others. *Friends of the Brethren* is financed by donations and has no ties with any of the other organizations listed in this publication.

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Associate Editors: Marleen Edwards, Robert Feith, Rosemary Edwards
Contributors: (many) "Thanks" to everyone involved.

Servants' News accepts articles for publication. Include a self-address stamped envelope for items that you want returned. We do not publish materials that attack individuals or organizations, nor do we publish materials that claim there is only one human organization through which the Eternal works. We are happy to print corrections for any significant errors. Address articles and letters to:

Friends of the Brethren Phone: 501-872-1003
PO Box 6516 Fax: 501-872-1004
Springdale, AR 72766-6516 E-Mail: 75260,1603@Compuserve.com



“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always”—Matt 28:19-20

“But when they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of man comes.” —Matt 10:23



The single greatest “witness” to the power of our Savior is the life he lives in us through the power of the holy spirit. More people have become interested in the truth because of personal contact with a believer than from any other source. Nevertheless, the apostles were commanded to go and teach all nations. And we are commanded to follow their commands (see verse at the top). Some people simply do not live near a converted person and must hear the Gospel some other way.

repented and been baptized by ministers in many different Sabbath-keeping organizations. As most of our readers are well aware of the current upheaval among the congregations, we must also be aware that it is not new. It happened in the time of the Apostles (1Cor 11:18, 2Pet 2:1, 3Jn 9-10, Jude, Rev 2:2) and throughout this century. Teachers in good congregations have taught false doctrine and true believers have been put out or decided to leave. Other converted people were put out because of jealousies or political “power plays.” Also, members struggling with sins and

Radio is one of those ways. **Ray Wooten** began a half-hour radio program while he was still employed by the Worldwide Church of God. He took a few weeks off to help start the **United Church of God (UCG)**, and has not missed a program since the middle of March. His program is named *Hope for Humanity*. He covers a variety of Biblical subjects including the law, the Sabbath, the purpose of man, prophecy, historical events, and the plan of salvation. He emphasizes the positive aspects of what our Savior has done for us and will do for us in the future.

The program airs at 10:30 A.M. every Sunday on station WFFX, 95.7 on the dial. The station is located between Birmingham and Tuscaloosa, Alabama and covers both of the cities. Costs have been kept to a minimum as one of the radio station employees attends the UCG congregation and another member has access to a recording studio free of charge.

The response to the program has been small, but significant considering the minimal cost. Mr. Wooten offers a free cassette copy of the current program to those that request it. Several people with no previous Sabbath-keeping background have requested one. The program encourages listeners to study on their own and we cannot know who the Eternal will be working with through this effort.

But there is more fruit! Nine people now attend the local congregation as a result of hearing this broadcast! Some of these people previously attended with the Worldwide Church of God but some did not. Yes, there are thousands of people that have

problems have dropped out of their congregation and not returned.

Doctrinally sound radio programs are one good way to reach the tens of thousands of people that have stopped attending Sabbath-keeping organizations. If they do decide to attend our congregations, our approach must be one of service and concern, not “sign-up, sit down, shut-up, and send money.”

The WFFX radio program is not the UCG’s ultimate media effort. It is simply an example of what can be done on a local basis. Ron Laughland in Nashville, Tennessee has a similar program of his own. Other men in the UCG are working on television and radio programs. In many cases, using local public-access television or an empty time-slot on a friendly local radio station can reduce costs far below those associated with national media-time purchases.

If any person or group would like to air Mr. Wooten’s program on a local station, he would be happy to cooperate. The United Church of God is mentioned only at the beginning and end of the broadcast. You would need access to modest professional editing facilities to record your own “header” and “trailer,” on each tape—giving a local phone number and address for interested listeners to contact you. Then, it is simply a matter of finding and paying (if necessary) a local station to air the program. “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work (John 9:4).

—Norman S. Edwards

UCG
On the
Air with
Hope for
Humanity
in Alabama

CONFERENCES: PAST AND FUTURE

The Sabbath in the 21st Century

Sponsored by "Friends of the Sabbath"
27068 La Paz #500 • Laguna Hills, CA 92656
714-362-4444

Dana Point, May 28-29, 1995

This conference was attended by 168 people from a great variety of organizations. The major presentations were:

"My Search for the Lord's Day at a Vatican University"

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Seventh Day Adventist*

"Sabbath & Sectarian Judaism"

Dr. Peter Nathan, *Ambassador University (WCG)*

"Sabbath in Colosse & Galacia"

Mr. Larry Walker, *United Church of God;*

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi and Mr. Peter Nathan

"Holyday or Holiday"

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Seventh Day Adventist.*

"The Sabbath—a Confession of Faith"

Mr. Ronald Dart, *Church of God International*

"Sabbath in 1st Century CE: Judaic & Christian Worship"

Mr. Larry Walker, *United Church of God;*

Dr. Greg Walburn, *Institute for Ethical Monotheism;*

Mr Peter Nathan and Samuele Bacchiocchi

"Sabbath & the Modern Woman"

Mrs. Lee Ann Luker, *United Church of God;*

Mrs. Sandy O'Maley, *Church of God, Modesto;*

Mrs. Carolyn Scharpen, *United Church of God*

"Argument from Silence"

Mr. Peter Nathan, *Ambassador University (WCG)*

"The Biblical Canon and the Sabbath"

Dr Ernest Martin, *Association for Scriptural Knowledge*

"The Sabbath and the New Covenant"

Mr. Larry Salyer, *Global Church of God*

"Church of God, 7th Day, a History" and

"The Sabbath & Christian Renewal"

Mr. Whaid Rose, *Church of God, 7th Day*

"Legacy of Steven Mumford to the Sabbath in America"

Mr. James Guy, *Worldwide Church of God*

"Sabbath and Modern Youth"

Mr. Bill Jacobs, *United Church of God;*

Scott Merritt and Vanessa Skidmore, *high school seniors*

"Divine Rest for Human Restlessness"

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Seventh Day Adventist.*

"Do's and Don'ts Reconsidered, Conclusion"

Mr Dennis Luker, *United Church of God*

A complete set (15 hours) of audio or video tapes of the conference are for sale. A transcript will be available very soon. To order, contact "Friends of the Sabbath" at the address or telephone number listed at the top of this article.

"Friends of the Sabbath" has no affiliation or financial dealings with *Friends of the Brethren*. 

The Church of God & Computers: Potential & Possibilities

A discussion at the 1995 Feast

How can the brethren in the churches of God use computers, computer bulletin board systems, computer online services (e.g. *America Online*), and the resources of the *Internet* or *World Wide Web* to help them grow in their Christianity and preach the gospel to the world? A discussion on various computer topics will be held in Destin, Florida on Oct. 10th and 11th at the Sandestin Beach Resort (800-277-0802). These are the second and third days of the Feast of Tabernacles (Hebrew calendar). Destin is located half way between Pensacola and Panama City—less than two hours drive from many organization's Feast sites in the Florida pan-handle.

Would you like to give a presentation or lead a discussion on the above topics or on other computer-related subjects? Are you interested in attending? Write to: Alan Ruth, PO Box 4373, Troy MI 48099, Email to ARUTH88521@aol.com or call 810-737-4037 for further information.

Network by Mail

We have had several requests to start a network or "pen-pals" section so *Servants' News* readers may get in contact with others. We are glad to be of service in this capacity, but would like to make sure everyone understands that we have no control over who ultimately reads this publication or who will write you if you place your address in this column. If you give your home address, someone could show up on your doorstep! Many other religious organizations read this publication and some may routinely send their literature to any address that appears to be a member.

We recommend that you rent a post-office box or a box from one of the many private mailing services. If you use this kind of address, you can simply close the box if you do not like the mail you are receiving. However, we will use the address that you submit to us.

Unfortunately, we have misplaced our oldest pen-pal request. So, if you would like a listing in this column, please resubmit it. Please include a one or two sentence description of yourself and your interests.

John McCauley, PO Box 132, Broomall PA 19008-3737. Single, interested in understanding exactly what the Bible says in its original language. Recently finished a thorough commentary on the Book of Galatians.



News from Local Congregations



This section is for short articles or letters about activities of local congregations. We will mention local congregations as they form or as we learn of significant news. Groups listed in this section may have some doctrines or policies which we cannot justify from the scriptures, but we believe most of them are a reasonable place for fellowship with the brethren. We believe the holy spirit will guide you in your fellowship decisions if you will study and ask.

We would appreciate any brief stories sent to Servants' News, PO Box 6516, Springdale, AR 72766.

New Mexico Region Church of God

We are a small congregation of about 70 people who are former members of the Worldwide Church of God. If you are one of the many who are upset with all of the changes and don't know where to go or what to do, we offer you a gentle place to go to feel safe, unhurried and not pressured to join anything. We are a congregation of believers in whom the Holy Spirit dwells and we are part of the greater Body of Jesus Christ which is the Church of God.

For more information and to find out where we are meeting, contact our pastor, Mr. Lon Lacey, at 505-822-8709 or Mary Wendt at 505-345-6910.

—Mary Wendt

United Church of God

After two months, United Church of God, an *International Association* is already the largest organization to split off from the Worldwide Church of God. At Pentecost services, they had 11,890 people and an offering of \$57 per person. There are over 150 congregations with about 100 paid ministers and 72 others serving as volunteers.

Temporary office space has been leased in Arcadia, California. You may call them at 818-294-0800 or fax to 818-294-0808. The mailing address is PO Box 661780, Arcadia CA 91066. An office staff of about 17 to 20 people is anticipated. Festival and summer-camp plans are well under way.

New Beginnings, a publication for the UCG membership, was born June 16, 1995, weighing in at 3 pages. It will certainly grow in future issues. Its purpose is to answer the United Church of God's biggest challenge: staying United.

Friends of the Brethren has spoken with many members and found a **great variety of thinking within the organization.** According to the chairman, David Hulme, "Mr. Armstrong's 18-point list of restored truth, while not a doctrinal statement in itself, stand confirmed in its essentials by the board." Yet the first one of Mr. Armstrong's restored truths is the "government of God"—the hierarchical form of government described in *Mystery of the Ages* is nothing like the form used by UCG!

Some leaders within the UCG would like to see locally governed congregations, others would like to govern the way they always have. Officially, the UCG recognizes many other Sabbath-keeping organizations as brethren, but some heads of local congregations have told their members not to read other organization's literature or attend with other groups.

The reasons that leaders have joined seem to be diverse. Some have preached few or none of the recent changes, having been continually demoted by their former employer. Others preached some of the changes, and a few were vigorously supporting their former employer only a few months ago. Which doctrines did they believe? Do some preach doctrines

that they don't believe? We have even heard several stories of men contacting multiple "Church of God" organizations to see which had the best employment package.

On the other hand, **much good has been accomplished.** Thousands of people now have a Sabbath-keeping congregation to attend that does not teach Protestant doctrines. Many others now have a choice of congregations to attend—a great help if some congregations insist that you see all doctrines their way.

Those interested in attending and serving a United Church of God congregation can contact the office listed at the beginning of this article. Local congregations are available in the following areas (listing is alphabetized by Country, State, then City):

Australia: Brisbane & Melbourne
Canada, British Columbia: Victoria.
Canada, Ontario: Toronto.
Scotland: Stirling
Switzerland: Geneva
Alaska: Anchorage, Wasilla.

Alabama: Birmingham, Geneva, Huntsville, Mobile.

Arkansas: Fayetteville, Jonesboro.
Arizona: Phoenix, Prescott Valley, Sedona, Tucson, Yuma.

California: Bakersfield, Chico, Crescent City, Eureka, Fresno, Garden Grove, Los Angeles, Modesto, Oakland, Redding, Red Bluff, Redlands, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, Santa Rosa, Stockton, Visalia.

Colorado: Ft. Collins, Grand Junction.

Florida: Deltona, Fort Myers Beach, Jacksonville, Orlando, Pensacola, Port St. Lucie, St. Petersburg, Tampa, West Palm Beach.

Georgia: Athens, Buford, Columbus, Dublin, Macon.

Idaho: Blackfoot, Boise, Coeur

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page
d'Alene, Twin Falls.

Illinois: Champaign, Rockford.

Indiana: Columbus, Elkhart, Ft. Wayne, Hammond, Indianapolis, Lafayette, Terre Haute.

Iowa: Des Moines

Kansas: Wichita.

Kentucky: Louisville.

Louisiana: Covington, Hammond, New Orleans.

Maryland: Baltimore.

Massachusetts: Boston.

Michigan: Ann Arbor, Detroit, Flint, Lansing

Minnesota: Brainerd, Duluth, Minneapolis, Rochester, St. Cloud, St. Paul.

Missouri: Cape Girardeau, Kansas City, St. Louis.

Montana: Kalispell.

North Carolina: Ashboro.

North Dakota: Bismarck, Fargo.

Nevada: Reno.

New Jersey: Montvale, Union.

New Mexico: Albuquerque, Farmington, Roswell, Santa Fe

New York: Elmira, New York, Utica.

Ohio: Akron, Athens, Cambridge, Chillicothe, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Mansfield, Marietta, Toledo, Youngstown.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma City, Tulsa.

Oregon: Albany, Bend, Eugene, Portland, Roseburg, Salem.

Pennsylvania: Bethlehem, Erie, Pittsburgh.

South Dakota: Brookings, Sioux Falls, Rapid City.

Tennessee: Nashville.

Texas: Austin, Big Sandy, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Ft. Worth, Harlingen, Houston, Lubbock, Midland, San Antonio, Victoria, Waco.

Utah: Salt Lake City.

Washington: Kennewick, Olympia, Seattle, Sedro Woolley, Spokane.

West Virginia: Charleston, Parkersburg, Princeton, Wheeling.

Wisconsin: Eau Claire, Janesville, La Crosse, Milwaukee.

Wyoming: Dubois.

Feast of Tabernacles

A number of organizations are planning festival sites that will accept peo-

ple without regard to their corporate affiliation. The festival dates are October 9-16 unless listed otherwise. (Some organizations calculate the calendar from their own understanding of the Scriptures rather than using the traditional Hebrew calendar which uses a complex set of rules not derived directly from the Bible.)

Only the initials of the organization are specified for sites run by organizations listed at right.

Feast Sites in Order by State:

Australia, Qld., Noosa. UCG.

Australia, Wollongong. GCG

Belgium, Hengelhof. GCG

Canada, B.C., Whistler (90 minutes from Vancouver). CGI.

Canada, B.C., Whistler. UCG.

Canada, Ontario, Collingwood. CGI.

Canada, Ontario, Hull. UCG

Canada, Ontario, Niagra Falls. GCG.

England, Berwick-on-Tweed. UCG.

Guyana, Georgetown. GCG

Malaysia. GCG.

Philippines. GCG.

South Africa. GCG.

Arizona, Tucson. UCG.

California, Kings Beach (near Lake Tahoe). CGI.

California, Del Mar (San Diego). GCG.

California, Morro Bay. Talents Ministries. 707-864-2250.

California, Redding. UCG.

Colorado, Colorado Springs. GCG.

Colorado, Glenwood Springs (90 miles East of Grand Junction). CBCG.

Colorado, Keystone. UCG.

Florida, Destin (East of Pensacola).

Computer conference is at this site! See story on page 4. CP.

Florida, Orlando. GCG.

Florida, Orlando. UCG.

Florida, Panama City Beach. CGI.

Florida, Pensacola. CBCG

Florida, St. Petersburg. Ministries of Yahweh. 705-696-3111.

Georgia, Jekyll Island. UCG

Kentucky, Lexington. UCG

Kentucky, Land-Between-the-Lakes. (near Paducah) CGI.

Massachusetts, Lowell. UCG.

Minnesota, Minneapolis. UCG.

Missouri, Lake of the Ozarks. GCG.

Missouri, Schell City (SE of Kansas City) Oct 8-15. Church of Israel, 417-432-3119.

Oklahoma, Wagoner. (near Muskogee) CGI.

South Carolina, Myrtle Beach. CGSD.

Texas, Corpus Christi. UCG.

Texas, Tyler. CGI.

Virginia, Virginia Beach. GCG.

Washington, Spokane. GCG

Places to Fellowship

This list contains a number of organizations with many Sabbath-keeping congregations and/or regular sermon-tape mailings. There is a diversity of doctrinal teachings so we encourage everyone to study the scriptures and prove doctrines for themselves. Most of these organizations welcome visitors, though individual congregations greatly vary. We encourage the people of the Eternal to fellowship and serve each Sabbath if practical.

Christian Biblical Church of God (CBCG). PO Box 1442, Hollister, CA 95024. 408-637-1875.

Church of God, 7th Day [Salem WV]. PO Box 328, Salem, WV 26426. 304-782-1411.

Church of God, International (CGI). P.O. Box 2530, Tyler TX 75710. 903-825-2525

Church of the Great God (CGG). PO Box 471846. Charlotte, NC 28247. 800-878-8220 or 704-544-2100

Congregation of God Seventh Day (CGSD). PO Box 2345, Kennesaw, GA 30144.

Cornerstone Publications (CP). 3802 Olive Street, Texarkana, TX 75503. 903-792-1352

General Conference of the Church of God 7th Day. PO Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233. 303-452-7973.

General Council of the Church of God (7th day). 1827 W. 3rd St. Meredian, ID 83642. 208-888-3380.

Global Church of God (GCG). PO Box 501111, San Diego CA 92150. 619-675-2222.

United Church of God (UCG). PO Box 661780, Arcadia CA 91066-1780. 818-294-0800. 

Oh, How I Love Your Law!

Part One

Why did David, a man full of the holy spirit and the future king of Israel, make this claim? What law was he talking about? Should each one of us make the same claim today?

The title of this article was taken from Psalm 119:97. The next four verses give us more insight into what David was thinking:

Oh how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they *are* ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies *are* my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word.

David saw great wisdom and understanding by studying and **doing** the ways of the Eternal. What law was he talking about? The ten commandments? Or more?

David spoke, read, and wrote Hebrew, the language of most of the Old Testament scriptures. The only complete books of scriptures that existed were the first five books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, and probably the book of Job. The books of Samuel and Psalms were written during his life. The word David used for “law” in his Psalm was *torah*, meaning “teaching” or “instruction,” though it is usually translated as “law.” Proverbs 1:8 provides an example: “My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law [*torah*] of your mother.” The RSV and other translations use “teaching” instead of “law.”

Torah is first found in Genesis 26:5

“because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws [*torah*].” Before the writings of Moses, Abraham must have known the teachings of the Eternal and obeyed them. We do not know if Abraham had a written law of some type or if he simply had oral teaching.

Several times in the book of Joshua we find the expression “book of the law [*torah*],” an obvious reference to the five books of Moses (Josh 1:8, 8:31, 23:6, 24:26). There are numerous other Old Testament references to the written “law [*torah*] of Moses.” From these scriptures, the unmodified word *torah* signifies the first five books of Moses. These were certainly the major written record of the Eternal’s law available to David.

If we look back at Psalm 119:98 we see that David gained great wisdom from the “commandments.” Were these the “ten commandments?” Actually, the phrase “ten commandments” never occurs in a literal translation of the scriptures. The expression appears three times in most English translations (Ex34:28, Deut 4:13,10:4), but the Hebrew word is *dabar*; meaning “word” or “saying.” The Moffatt translation accurately renders the phrase “ten sayings” in Deuteronomy. David wrote the Hebrew *mitzvah* for commandment. *Mitzvah* is the word most commonly translated “commandment” and describes the hundreds of different commandments that the Eternal gave to

His people. The “ten sayings” are a very important part of these commandments.

David did not meditate only on “10 commandments,” but on the entirety of the Scripture that was available to him. David continues on in Psalm 119 to refer to the Eternal’s “testimonies,” “precepts” and “word”—each word reflects a different aspect of His instruction to us. David would have followed the instructions for a king: “Also it shall be, when he [the king] sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes” (Deut 17:18-19).

What can we conclude from this? Are we to offer animal sacrifices and carry out the death sentences prescribed in the books of Moses? No! We have an Eternal Sacrifice in the form of our Savior, the Messiah. Also, we are not in charge of the civil government at this time. Yet there is a great number of the laws given by the Eternal that we can put into practice, and we can learn important lessons from the rest. There are essentially three categories of laws:

(1) Principles governing how we should love the Eternal and our neighbor. These principles are timeless and represent the Eternal’s love in action (John 14:15, 1Jn 5:3). We can

use most of them directly in our lives.

(2) National laws and punishments for disobedience. We should learn these principles as we will be responsible for administering them in the Millennium (Isa 2:3). We can use the laws now when brethren have difficulties with each other and submit to other brethren for judgement rather than going to this world's systems (1Cor 6:1-6).

(3) Ceremonial laws. Many of the laws of the temple service, sacrifices, ceremonial uncleanness, etc. have no direct application today. Nevertheless, they are well worth our study time as they teach us about the Eternal's nature, the evil of sin, etc.

Most of us understand our purpose to be Kings and Priests in the Millennium (Rev 1:6, 5:10). Most of us understand that "for out of Zion shall go forth the law [Hebrew *torah*]" (Isa 2:3). Indeed the scripture indicates the legal system in the Millennium will be very similar to the system under the judges "Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards....I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning..." (Isa 1:23,26).

Why, then, is there so little study of the laws that we will be administering in the Millennium, the laws that define righteousness? (Psalm 119:172.) Many of our readers may not be aware that Ambassador College never taught a class in the "law of God." An Old Testament Survey course, and a couple of courses in the prophets were the closest things available. Rather than speculate about the reasons for this lack of study, let us begin our study now.

Law Given at Sinai

The words that the Eternal spoke directly to the millions of Israelites are recorded in Exodus 20. Here we find the "10 sayings," commonly known as the "10 commandments." The people asked the Eternal to stop speaking to them (v 19) so Moses delivered the rest of that covenant to them. The covenant was not ratified until Exodus 24:7-8. These three intervening chapters of

Exodus (21, 22 & 23) contain a wealth of useful, practical laws.

We will cover these chapters verse by verse. Some of these laws seem strange compared with modern day laws. They should! Our modern day laws have made a large contribution to the destruction of our societies. The Eternal's laws were designed to be simple enough that all could learn them, but complex enough to handle a wide variety of human situations. They were designed to maximize justice, and minimize the misuse of the law.

Five Principles of Good Law

Many laws contain a specific penalty or restitution (restoring money or other goods to a person that was wronged) that was to be administered by other humans. There are five principles that appear to be followed in nearly all of these laws—principles ignored by many man-made laws. Understanding these principles before we begin our study will help us understand the design of many laws. The five principles are:

#1 A just punishment must be given to the offender, stiff enough that he does not want to repeat the offense, yet not so hard that it needlessly destroys him as a useful citizen. Many Western countries do not follow this principle at all. A person that pretends to be armed and steals a few hundred dollars can easily be sentenced to 10 years in jail. A white-collar criminal can steal millions of dollars from people, restore none of it, and receive a sentence of a year or two. Worse yet, some white-collar crimes are controlled by antiquated laws with low maximum fines: the convicted criminal may have to pay a fine that is a fraction of the amount stolen!

#2 The offended must receive a just restitution. Victims should be compensated by the offender. Again, most Western-nation law specifies fines paid to the government, not restitution to victims. Civil law does compensate its victims, sometimes hundreds of times more than their actual losses.

#3 Laws must make it difficult to obtain restitution falsely. There are

numerous scams in the United States where individuals routinely walk on to the property of others and pretend to be injured—then collect multiple thousands of dollars.

#4 Laws must be designed to greatly reduce the chance of administering a wrongful punishment—especially a death penalty. Most Western nations do a reasonable job in this area. Most human laws require a reasonable amount of proof before a conviction can be obtained. There are some notable exceptions, however: a person can easily spend ten years in jail if someone "plants" a significant quantity of drugs in his coat, luggage or vehicle. Also, children can go through the terrifying experience of being taken away from their parents by the state—all based on unconfirmed reports of "child abuse."

#5 Laws must not produce a harmful effect on society. The purpose of law is to give each family a chance to work and enjoy the fruits of their labor. The law is to prevent people from interfering with the rights of others and to provide for punishment or restitution when that happens. The law was never intended to protect families from their own mismanagement—they were to reap the consequences of their own mistakes and to learn from them.

A classic case of ignoring this principle is the United States "Aid to Dependent Children" program. The well-meaning people that set up the program wanted to give the most help to families in the most need. So, they set up formulas to increase benefits for each additional child present and decrease benefits if an able-bodied but unemployed father was present. The long term effect of this program? America now has millions of poor families with lots of children and no fathers. Laws should provide relief to people in difficult situations, but should not make the difficult situations so desirable that people get into them on purpose. Another classic case of ignoring this principle is welfare systems that put more money in a person's pocket than they would have if they worked at minimum wage.

We will see these six principles in

action as we go through many of the laws in the Bible. We will start in Exodus 21 and go through other related chapters.

Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them: (Ex 21:1).

Moses was commanded to give these judgments to everyone, there were no secret laws.

Servants and Masters

If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing (Ex 21:2).

Many people will look back on the system of servants or slaves in the Bible and say it was cruel and restrictive. However, if you would compare that system with the prison systems found in today's societies, you would find the prisons far more evil. As we see in the above verse, a servant could serve a maximum of six years. How many years do some people spend in prison? A servant was living with a family—in society—not isolated. He was continually doing productive work, and learning to work to earn his living; not learning about how to commit crimes from a group of hardened criminals.

Were servants sometimes mistreated by their masters? probably no more so than prisoners are treated today. Investigations into prison life have revealed a great many prisoners abused by their guards and fellow prisoners. In most cases their is nothing the prisoner can do. The Eternal instructed his people not to automatically return a slave that had escaped his master, but to keep the slave with him (Deut 23:15-16). If the slave was being kept illegally (longer than six years, in spite of an offer for his redemption, etc.), then the slave would have a chance to tell his story to the people he escaped to and to obtain justice. (On the other hand, if the slave ran away unjustly, his master would certainly be able to pursue him, show that he was rightfully his, and take him back and punish him.)

Further, we find in Deuteronomy 15:12-15 that a slave should be given enough possessions when he is let go so that he can earn his own living.

Today, when prisoners are released, they are not usually given enough money to pay a month's rent in a cheap apartment and they usually have no job. Returning to a life of crime is often the only apparent alternative.

If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. But if the servant plainly says, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free," then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever (Ex 21:3-6).

At first reading, this law may sound terrible: Separating a man from his family and children? Why would the Eternal do this? This is an example of law principle #5 in action. It would be best if a man not marry while he is a servant. He should obtain his freedom, get his means of income in order, then plan for a wife and children. If a servant is so emotionally or sexually desirous of a wife that he cannot wait, then he can marry, knowing that he may not be able to take his wife and children with him (though he could possibly purchase them in the future). This law protects the wife and children—they live with the master, a man that is a known provider.

If the man is willing to give up his freedom forever, to be a servant forever rather than the head of his own household, then he may have a permanent mark made on him and live with his master forever. This was indeed a sign of disgrace—the man has chosen the comforts of a good master rather than be the master of his own house. Rather than choosing to serve the Eternal directly, he has chosen to serve another man. Nevertheless, there have always been people that would rather others do their thinking for them, so the Eternal made this provision: the man could elect to live with his family forever, but as servants. This is far better

than today's systems where such families are encouraged to break up by welfare laws or where parents and children may be forcibly separated by jail sentences or government social workers.

And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money (Ex 21:7-11).

A man selling his daughter? Why would he do that? Again, this was a consequence of someone who had mismanaged his resources and had few options left—if the man had to sell himself as a servant, his daughter would probably become a servant anyway. By selling his daughter, the man had a chance to continue working and to redeem her (buy her back).

The rest of the law provides protection for a young woman who's father put him in such a situation. She should not have to do the hard work that the men do. Also, there are certain conditions specified if the master "betrothed her to himself." If the man betrothed her for a while, but changed his mind **before** the marriage, he "owes her something" as he has kept other potential husbands from seeking to marry her. The final sentences deal with fairness in multi-wife situations. A discussion of the reasons for polygamy in the Bible exceeds the scope of this article, but it is clear that the Eternal insisted on fairness even in these situations.

We will pose a question more relevant to today's readers: Why did the Eternal start this section of law with laws governing servants? Probably because that was the most common result when people transgressed against their neighbor. **Most punishments were economic in nature and if a person did not have the money, he**

became a servant (Ex 22:3).

Capital Crimes

He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered him into his hand [killed by accident] then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee. But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die (Ex 21:12-14).

The Bible continues the law with the method for handling murder cases. Thousands of books and movies are produced about cases where a person is found dead and there are no witnesses: Who did it? Was it accidental or planned? Does the evidence point to the real murderer or was someone else “set up?” The Eternal brilliantly prescribes a system to eliminate most of these problems, yet almost no nation uses it!

Numbers 35:11-29 and Deuteronomy 19:2-13 give the rest of the details about this verse. Anyone who killed someone by accident was to flee to one of several “cities of refuge” and remain there until the death of the high priest. While this was a hardship to the people that accidentally caused another’s death, it encouraged people to observe safety precautions. The person was not “in jail,” they could have a job in the city of refuge; their family could visit them or even arrange to move there.

To see how well this law works, let us look at it from the point of view of a potential murderer plotting a crime. He must decide whether he is going to flee to the city of refuge or not. If he tries to make the murder look like an accident and flees, then he is going to be stuck in the city of refuge for an unknown number of years. This would be completely unacceptable to a “professional killer”—he would be out of a job. Furthermore, the act of fleeing admits he did the killing and there would certainly be an investigation. He will have to answer hard questions. If he is known to hate the man or if some witnesses saw the killing, he will certainly be condemned to death.

If the murderer decides not to flee—

to pretend like he did not do it, he is taking a big risk. If he is ever suspected of the crime, he is in big legal trouble. All that witnesses will have to establish to convict him is that he was at the scene during the crime. He will not be able to claim that the murder was an accident or that it was done in the heat of anger—if those things were true, he should have fled. If he claims to have been there but did not do it, then he should have reported it to the judges. If a man does not flee (openly admitting that he killed the person), there will be no court arguments about whether it was intentional or not; if you are found guilty and you did not flee, you will receive the death penalty.

And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. (Ex 21:15,17).

This is the Eternal’s statement on elder-abuse. It is simple and straightforward.

He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death (Ex 21:16).

In the cases above, there is no question as to the guilt. Kidnappings are almost always premeditated. The Eternal commands swift justice in these situations.

Damages for injuries

If men contend with each other, and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but is confined to his bed, if he rises again and walks about outside with his staff, then he who struck him shall be acquitted. He shall only pay for the loss of his time, and shall provide for him to be thoroughly healed (Ex 21:18-19).

Again we see the strong economic basis in the Eternal’s law. The man who injures another must pay for the loss of the injured’s time (value of his day’s away from his work), and pay the expenses of his healing. He does not go to jail with other criminals, he stays in his job and pays. If he cannot pay, he becomes a servant.

And if a man beats his male or female servant with a rod, so that he

dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished. Notwithstanding, if he remains alive a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he is his property (Ex 21:20-21).

The master was expected to understand his purpose to teach the servant to work and make him into a productive citizen. Killing him or causing him permanent injury was not an option (see verses 26-27). Yet, if a servant was extremely difficult, the master had to punish him. Supposing the servant became a servant because he had a terrible temper and injured others. If he continued injuring others while a servant, he has already sold himself and has no way to pay for the injury. The master must pay the debt, and punish the servant so severely that he does not repeat the problem. “Judgments are prepared for scoffers, and beatings for the backs of fools” (Prov 19:29).

If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman’s husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine (Ex 21:22).

Some issues are complex enough that methods similar to those used in today’s courts are necessary: The offended party asks for an award and the judges determine if it is reasonable. In the above case, there are many variables: Did the woman intentionally join the fight? How near due was she? Did she have a tendency to miscarry anyway?

But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. If a man strikes the eye of his male or female servant, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for the sake of his eye. And if he knocks out the tooth of his male or female servant, he shall let him go free for the sake of his tooth. (Ex 21:23-27).

Do these verses (and parallel ones in Lev 24:20 and Deut 19:21) require the same injury to be inflicted upon a person that inflicted the original injury? The first thing we must understand is that this is also a limitation of liability

as much as a punishment. The many-fold avenging often required by powerful carnal people (for example, “he cut off my finger, I will take his hand”) was not allowed. A just recompense for each injury must be made based on the injury, not based on the community standing of the injured.

Most maimings were unintentional, but the law does not distinguish between someone who deliberately attacked or someone that was foolishly brandishing a weapon. Why is the penalty the same? An eye is no easier to live without whether caused by an attacker or a joker. These scriptures show that the person causing the maiming deserves to have the same thing done to them. This greatly discourages carelessness! Nevertheless, the injured person is usually interested in compensation for his loss, not in infliction of the same injury to another. In the verses above, the master inflicting the injury on the servant did not receive a similar injury, he let the servant go free.

The principle of compensation instead of corporal punishment is found elsewhere in scripture. (See Exodus 21:30 in the next few paragraphs.) Some penalties, such as those for killing a person, specifically could not be ransomed (Num 35:31-32), giving the understanding that most other punishments could be.

Responsibility for Safety

If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death (Ex 21:28-29).

While these verses are talking about oxen, the principles apply to many things we have today, such as automobiles, power tools, etc. If an animal or a machine kills a person, you get rid of it so it cannot happen again. (In the case of a machine, it may be possible simply to replace the failing part—if the brakes

fail on a truck and it hits and kills someone, the failing part(s) of the brake system would be replaced, not the entire truck.) If the owner already knew about the unsafe condition and did nothing, then he is responsible for the death and can be put to death himself!

If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him. Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him (Ex 21:30-31).

The mercy of the family that lost the member was important here. Was the owner planning to slaughter the ox the next day? Did one of his children let the ox out by accident? Or did the owner routinely scorn others that told him about the dangers of his ox?

It may seem unfair that a wealthy man may make such a mistake and live because he can pay a ransom where a poor man that makes the same error may have to die because he cannot pay a ransom. The scriptures says: “The ransom of a man’s life is his riches...” (Prov 13:8). There are situations where a man’s riches will preserve his life. (But **greed** for riches often cause a man’s death—Prov 1:19).

If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned (Ex 21:32).

Thirty shekels of silver was a typical price for a slave of the time. Why could a family demand any price for the death of one of their children, but only a certain amount for the death of a servant? Law principles #3 and #5 are working here: If a master could demand a much larger amount for the death of a servant, then servants would be worth more dead than alive. Evil masters would be tempted to send servants to places where they knew there were dangerous situations and “warned” owners. The Eternal wisely designed his law so that a servant would be most valuable to his owner when he is alive, well, and healthy.

And if a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls in it, the owner of the pit shall make it good;

he shall give money to their owner, but the dead animal shall be his (Ex 21:33-34).

The example is an ox, but the principle applies to many kinds of property. If a man creates an unsafe condition that injures another’s property, he is responsible for restoring the property, but no more. He is allowed to keep the salvage value of the other’s damaged property (the ox, above, could be used to make leather, soap, chicken-food, etc.) If the offended party were allowed to receive replacement property and salvage the damaged property, they might find it profitable to deliberately look for such unsafe conditions and send their property into them (see law principles #3 and #4).

If one man’s ox hurts another’s, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide the money from it; and the dead ox they shall also divide. Or if it was known that the ox tended to thrust in time past, and its owner has not kept it confined, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal shall be his own (Ex 21:35-36).

Again, this can be applied to many types of property. In the first example, we cannot tell who is “at fault” (we do not know which ox started the fight or why), so the owners simply split the cost of the loss and split the salvage value of the house and tree. Similarly, if one man’s rotten tree falls into another man’s house, neither having ever warned the other of the danger, They should split the cost of the house repairs.

If someone is aware of a dangerous situation and fails to take action, then they are responsible to restore damage done, but no more. If the house owner warned the tree owner that the tree was rotten and soon ready to fall, then the tree owner would be responsible to pay the entire house repair, but he would get to keep any salvage from the operation.

To Be Continued...

This concludes Exodus 21. There are many more interesting chapters in our study of the Eternal’s law—the law that we hope to have a part in teaching during the Millennium.

—Norman S. Edwards

Your Paper Said It, But Is It True?

Many of us have grown accustomed to trusting certain publications. We do so because our experience has shown that they have always told us the truth as far as we can determine. These publications that we trust may be national or local newspapers, magazines, special interest newsletters, or maybe a publication from a religious organization.

What would happen if one of these publications obtained erroneous information and printed it? Would they print a correction and let you know? Or might they forget about it and leave you in the dark?

Obviously, the significance of the mistake is important. If a publication mistakenly prints that your friend Jane had a baby boy when she really had a girl, she will forgive you if you send the wrong color outfit. But what about articles on important doctrines, Bible History, Bible teachers, etc. Could you lose a friendship or believe a false doctrine because of a mistake in your paper?

These questions really hit home when we see this happens to us personally. A religious organization wrote an article about *Friends of the Brethren* which contained many statements that were the opposite of the truth. The lack of desire to correct the mistake was amazing. We have withheld the organization's name as we are not interested in attacking organizations, but we appeal to readers everywhere to check the facts of an article before they make a big decision based on it. We also ask readers to let us know of any incorrect facts in our publications so we can correct them.

Following this, we reprint the text of the letters exchanged about this article. If anyone would like to check our facts, we would be happy to send exact copies of these letters.

Dear Editor [of religious newspaper],

I was a bit mystified by your story on the Friends of the Brethren in the April 4, 1995, issue of the [name of paper withheld.]. Every Friends of the Brethren publi-

cation contains our address and phone number, yet we have never received any inquiries from anyone identifying themselves as a representative of [your paper]. This is probably why your article contained so many errors:

1. [Your paper said,] "This mailing comes from a person who left the Global Church..." I have attended with the Global Church of God for almost every Sabbath since its very first meeting. I attended with the Global Church of God last Sabbath. I do have some differences from the leadership about some scriptures, but I believe the Global Church has the trunk of the tree correct. They understand that we are to live by "every word of God" (Luke 4:4) and that it is through the sacrifice of our Savior and his power in us that we should do these good works. They understand the need for repentance from sin, baptism, faith, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. They understand the identity of modern day Israel (Is your 2-year study still continuing?) and many of the prophecies that are soon to affect our nations and the rest of the world (Gen 22:17, Gen 48-49, Ezk 37:15-28, Matt 24 & Revelation, the book). I could list many more points of agreement than of disagreement. The Global Church of God does not endorse the activities of the Friends of the Brethren, but have taken Gamaliel's approach: "...if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it..." (Acts 5:38-39).

2. [Your paper said,] "Therefore, he has followed the example of others set in causing division and leaving our organization by causing further division and leaving that organization." I did not leave your organization; [minister name withheld] disfellowshipped me. He agreed that I had not caused any kind of trouble for any member [of that organization], but told me that the corporate policy required that I be disfellowshipped if I planned to attend a church organization that was made up primarily of former [your] members. When Paul found some members saying "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos" (1Cor 3:4), he did not disfellowship the people that were "of Apollos," but told all the factions to look to God rather than men. I am happy to learn that [your organization] has now changed this policy and does not automatically disfellow-

ship people for fellowshipping with other brethren. We believe the True Church is the body of believers with the holy spirit, no matter which organization they fellowship with. We have readers that fellowship with your organization, with the Global Church of God, with many other church organizations and with unincorporated home meetings. We do not cause division by refusing literature or fellowship to someone just because they listen to other teachers. Do you?

3. [Your paper said,] "How sad this becomes as another splinter group emerges and seeks to garner a following." If you will check our Statement of Purpose on page 4 of our April issue, you will find that we are specifically not seeking a following, that we do not call ourselves a church and that we do not attempt to control what is taught in local congregations.

4. [Your paper said,] "It is interesting to consider that all the splinter groups teach essentially the same things." While some groups do have similar teachings, anyone who has read the Directory of Sabbath Observing Groups (Bible Sabbath Association, Fairview, OK 73737) cannot seriously believe that "all the splinter groups teach the same thing." If you do not believe the book, you can call or write the organizations and see the diversity of teachings for yourself. Since [your organization] believes that God is working in many of the Protestant churches, and since many of your doctrines are very similar, could you be causing division by remaining separate from these well-established churches? Should not you merge with a Seventh-day Baptist or other similar group and then encourage future merging with other groups to eliminate divisions within the Body of Christ? Do you allow your members to freely attend these similar groups or do you believe you have more truth than these Protestant groups?

5. [Your paper said,] "They claim they have more truth than any other group." Friends of the Brethren does not claim to have more truth than other similar groups. Please see paragraph 2 of our Statement of Purpose: "The only authority we have is from the Bible and the Holy Spirit (which is never in conflict with the Scriptures). We do not believe that the Eternal works exclusively or even primarily through us. We do not

Continued on Next Page

Does ~~VOTING~~ Cause People to Play Politics?

At this time in history, both nations and church organizations are concerned about government. What form should it be? Is one-man rule too abusive? Is democracy ineffective because too many people play politics?

What form of government does the Bible prescribe for humans to use?

We do find voting in the Bible. The Greek *cheirotoneo* literally means "raising the hand" and is translated "vote" in the *Weymouth Bible* and *Young's Literal Translation*. The KJV translates it "ordain" in Acts 14:23 and "choose" in 2 Corinthians 8:19. Some scholars claim that the word changed to mean "appoint" during the apostle's time, but if voting was an abomination to the Eternal, why did the Bible author's choose a word used for "vote" in historical documents?

Continued from Previous Page claim to have 'more truth' than anyone else."

We hope that [your publication] is eager to maintain a reputation of accurate and truthful reporting to your readers. After all, why should people trust your publication in great spiritual matters if you have trouble getting the basic facts of a simple news story? We ask that you print a correction in [your publication]. If you need any additional information, we would be glad to supply it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Norman S. Edwards

June 5, 1995 [from religious newspaper]
Dear Norm,

Thank you for your letter about the [publication name] item about Friends of the Brethren. I forwarded it to those who were directly involved in producing the piece.

[Three sentences about mutual friends omitted.]

It was nice to hear from you again.

Sincerely yours, [Editor's Signature]

June 12, 1995 [from *Freinds of the Brethren*]
Dear Editor [of same religious paper],

Thank you for your nice letter of June 5, 1995. I was glad to hear that you forwarded it to those who were directly involved in producing the April 4, 1995 article about Friends of the Brethren. I assume the people that produced the article would be the ones that would decide what kind of correction to

Obviously, many Biblical decisions were made without voting. The Bible contains no simple statement such as "the right form of government is..." or "men should govern like..." We do find a statement about what government should not be: "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever desires to be first shall be slave of all" (Mark 10:42-44).

Furthermore, we find that the righteousness of people and leaders is more important than government form: "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov 14:34). "When the righteous are in authority, the

print—if I am wrong please let me know.

Could you let me know who was responsible? I would be happy to write, fax, call or eMail them directly—whichever they prefer. My eMail address is 75260.1603@CompuServe.com.

I still get calls and letters about the article from members of a variety of organizations. I would prefer that [your publication] print the correction—if I made a similar mistake, I would hope that someone would give me the chance to correct it first. However, if it does not look like a correction is forthcoming in the next few weeks, I would like to print one in our own publication, *Servant's News*. Our next press deadline is June 19. Please try to respond by this time.

I am faxing this letter to you for speedy delivery, I will mail a copy also.

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely, Norman S. Edwards

June 13, 1995 [from religious newspaper]

Fax To: Norman Edwards

Company: Friends of the Brethren

From: [religious newspaper Editor]

Hi Norman. Thanks for your fax.

I have decided not to run a correction. Kind regards, [Editor].

Some people called about the erroneous article and received the correct information. But most readers probably believed it. How many other erroneous articles have been printed about more vital issues? Who is believing them? ☞

people rejoice; but when a wicked *man* rules, the people groan" (Prov 29:2).

"Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua" (Josh 24:31). Yet under the same form of government, Israel sinned greatly (see Judges). The Eternal gave them a king in his anger (Hos 13:11). About five kings were righteous, and dozens were bad (see Kings and Chronicles). Even the New Testament congregations had true and false brethren (see Rev 2 & 3). It was not the system, but personal righteousness that was emphasized.

Playing politics is the art of **convincing those with power to support a specific person or cause**, even though it may not be good for the majority. Is "playing politics" confined to one type of government? **No!** In a government with voting, a politician expends much energy trying to convince the voters that he and his causes are right. He builds up himself and puts down others to get votes. He often does not care if he has to lie to the voters, as long as he gets the votes and does not "get caught."

In an autocratic top-down government, a politician tries to convince the leaders that he and his causes are right. He builds himself up in the sight of leaders, and puts down others in order to get favor and promotions. The more leaders and the higher the rank of leaders that a politician can endear himself to, the better off he is. If he can stop others from gaining access to leaders, so much the better for him. He often does not care if he has to lie to people or suppress those under him, as long as the leaders like him and he does not "get caught."

From the politicians in the book of kings, to Haman in Esther, to Ananias and Sapphira, to Diotrephes, to the false apostles in Revelation 2, to the many "Church of God" groups in our day, there have been politicians at work. **Self-seeking sin is the biggest problem, not the form of government.** "But on this *one* will I look: On *him* who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Is 66:2). If you would like to learn more about government from the Bible, write for our article: *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?*

—Norman S. Edwards

Letters
& Responses

We print a representative sampling of our mail—both positive and negative. We do not include names unless we are fairly sure that the writer would not object. We include our response to each letter in this type-style. We have selected a title for each letter for easy reference. If writers supply their own title, we will be happy to use it.

Struggling With New Teachings

LETTER: June 8, 1995
Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your letter of May 5th. It was a great encouragement to me.

You offered an article just being completed: "Assembling on the Sabbath." Yes, I would like to have it.

I have great sorrow that these new divisions have sprung up between God's people in my lifetime. But I know each of us must follow his and her own conscience, and that includes the Pastor General of WCG.

"All things work together for good," etcetera, and I know these things will eventually too, and I look forward to that time.

I am having a difficult time with some of the explanations and teachings, and I can't help thinking of them as "loopholes." Just after I sent a letter of encouragement to Pasadena, thinking perhaps the worst of the rumble was over, comes the new Worldwide News of Tuesday May 23, 1995, and more "in-depth" studies on Sabbath-keeping and on Hebrews 4:9. Just when I thought I had weathered the storms of change, there comes an additional "blowing of wind." It seems to me all 10 commandments express the will of God and are valid for all time, else why is God going to reveal the ark, the tent, and the altar of incense after He gathers His people together again and shows them mercy? (2 Maccabees 2:4-8.)

Also, why would the Lord insist upon the keeping of the Feast of Booths year after year (Zech 14:16-

19) when He arrives to be king over the whole earth (verse9)?

The article in the current issue of the *Worldwide News* sure is a far cry from the Sabbath-or-Sunday article on page 11 in the Nov/Dec 1990 *Good News* magazine.

I believe all these things are still valid for us today, not that they in themselves bring salvation, and not the "Jesus PLUS" the other things (as WCG is currently teaching against), but for me—I keep the Sabbaths not in place of Jesus, or Jesus "plus"—I keep them because of Jesus. I am distressed to know how easily it is to be deceived! I am wondering what the Feast of Tabernacles will bring in the sermons with WCG!!?

Please continue to send whatever you can.

Servant of the Lord,

—J.C., Michigan

RESPONSE: We admire your diligence to study and learn. Even though it can be discouraging at times, it is much better to be humble before the Word of the Eternal (Is 66:2), than to feel you have the scriptures understood and your salvation all worked out (John 5:39). We encourage you to keep studying and let our Saviour place you in **His body** where he sees fit (1Cor 12:18).

—Norman S. Edwards

Back on Track with the Truth

LETTER: May 16, 1995
Dear Sir,

Thank you for the first issue of "Servants' News," I would appreciate your continuing to send the publication to me. I'm a member of the WCG which is, as you know, in a mass state of confusion. Many of us are struggling to sort thru the confusion and get back on track with the Truth.

Sincerely,

—E.D., Texas

RESPONSE: Don't give up!

—Norman S. Edwards

Why So Many Different Groups

LETTER: June 12, 1995
Dear Friends,

I'm a former member of the Worldwide Church of God. A year ago when I left, things were really falling apart, but even now there are so many different groups all claiming to have the truth that I'm having trouble

sorting them out. I hope you can help.

A friend in the Church of God, International where I have been visiting some told me your literature really makes a lot of sense and is helping him out a lot.

Would it be possible to get a list of material that you offer or some type of help in sorting this all out?

Thank you very much

Yours truly,

—S.H., Missouri

RESPONSE: Many others are sharing the same concerns at this time. We all need to be anchored on the Eternal and his word, not on men and organizations. Please see the lead articles in this issue.

—Norman S. Edwards

A Kinder, Gentler, Loving People

LETTER: May 31, 1995
Dear Mr. Edwards,

We appreciate the work you are doing—striving to unite. God's people should be kind, gentle and loving to one another. So many have been deeply hurt by all the divisions in the Worldwide Church of God.

It was a traumatic thing for us to make the decision to leave the WCG but we had to in order to survive spiritually and emotionally. At the present we are attending the GCG as there is a congregation within one hour's drive. We have been welcomed so wonderfully. What a precious feeling.

Our children are split in different groups now—some due to their spouses preference. We see many families being divided this way and wonder where all this is leading. I'm studying material about the United Church of God. We are leaning toward the way that church is being organized. I think we are now somewhat fearful of trusting any one man. Never again will we put so much confidence in man but will put our trust in God and Christ and pray that He will grant us wisdom.

Please accept our gift to help with your (God's) work.

Friends,

—M. & D. B., South Carolina

RESPONSE: Thank you for your kind words. We are not trying to unite the Eternal's people under an organization but to encourage them to be united under Him. You have given good advice.

—Norman S. Edwards

Global or United Church?

LETTER:

May 25, 1995

Friends of the Brethren:

I read some articles in your news letter about UCG and my ideas about that is: if the Almighty God wants that, it will work and if not it won't.

Someone [who] wrote that ought to with Global. That is my true feeling that if some of the ministers in UCG need to repent that have a problem with someone and I will not name the person.

Global has been preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and of Jesus Christ for about three years and are far ahead of UCG and I think that it [UCG] is not necessary.

By the way, this is a friend of mine's new letter.

Everything is what it was after Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong died, in Global. It is growing and it isn't being knocked down. The telecast is being done as well.

In my opinion I don't think United Church of God will work. There are problems and disagreements in it.

Sincerely,

—Member of Global Church

RESPONSE: Many people are asking similar questions about the various church organizations: Are they all necessary? I think your initial paragraph is a good conclusion: "If the Almighty God wants that, it will work and if not it won't." We feel that attending the United Church of God is a much better choice than attending an organization that teaches essentially Protestant doctrines. We feel that too many church organizations are spending too much of their effort fighting other church organizations and not enough doing their work (Matt 14:45-51). Paul rejoiced when "Christ is preached," even though those preaching were not unified (Phil 1:15-18).

I do not think we should be in a hurry to condemn any group that is teaching people to obey the Eternal's law and to accept the Messiah as their Savior. We might be able to personally feel better if everyone joined the group that we are in, but that would not make us "right." History shows that the true believers were almost never the largest group.

You mentioned that "some of the ministers in the UCG need to repent that have a problem with someone." I am sure that a number of people in many congregations have treated others unfairly and need to repent. I pray that they all come to

see it and repent. If leaders in a local congregation are treating people unscripturally and will not repent, I would suggest that those who know about the problem follow the steps in Matthew 18:15-17, then find a new congregation if problems are not resolved. If everyone took this approach, the unrepentant leaders would no longer have congregations. On the other hand, we must be careful to realize that not all leaders in a specific organization are of the same character. An organization with one bad leader may have many other good men.

I encourage you to continue serving in the Global Church of God. That organization is making an effort to preach the gospel to the world, and to continue teaching people the truth as they understand it.

You did not ask to receive Servants' News in your letter, so I have not added you to the mailing list. However, if you would like to receive it, please let us know.

May the Eternal bless you as you seek to obey Him!

—Norman S. Edwards

Military Government Continued

LETTER:

May 25, 1995

Dear Norm,

Received your Newsletter. Very impressive. Would like a copy of "How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?"

I went straight from the US Military into the Worldwide Church of God. The only change in government I observed was that Officers were now called Ministers, and Sergeants were now called Deacons.

I was told that "Church Government" was "God's Government," but it looked like a version of the US Military Government to me. It disturbed me that the church embraced such a worldly form of government. But Mr. Armstrong's expounding of the Bible made sense to me, even if "Church Government" did not.

[personal paragraph removed]

Have a good Sabbath,

—H.C., Altadena, CA

RESPONSE: It is important to realize that Herbert Armstrong studied government in the 1930's and came up with a conclusion far different than his practice in later years. Many of the original articles on top-down government that were published in the 1950's were not written by him but by his assistants. In the 70's and 80's, other men continually told Mr. Armstrong that he was the "one man that

God was using." It is obvious that some of those men were more interested in the finances of the organization than its message—when they left the organization they pursued financial careers rather than continue to teach the truth on their own.

We also must realize that Herbert Armstrong was probably unaware of how his Government was being carried out at the local levels during the 70's and 80's. Both you and I worked and attended services at the Pasadena campus for most of those years and we had never had a chance to speak to Mr. Armstrong in person. Nevertheless, the government problems were very real. We certainly cannot use mistakes of the past to justify making the same mistakes again.

—Norman S. Edwards

Joining Without Proving

LETTER:

May 23, 1995

I received a copy of your newsletter from a friend who is confused and worried about certain changes in the WCG.

I have left the organization to take time to prove all things, to study, to pray and meditate on what God is allowing to occur in the WCG, To one day hold fast to that which is good and to always obey God rather than men.

My desire is to know God's Truth whatever it may be—regardless if it shakes the very foundation of my present and past beliefs. Sometimes we hold fast to those things we were taught even when we did not prove them, only because a man or an organization we believed to be God's only True Church told us so.

I'm amazed that so many have left the WCG to join other organization without proving "their" doctrinal beliefs. It's funny and sad that these organizations are claiming that now they are God's true church and no other [church is] and they have the "truth" and no other [has it]. Yet, brethren left the WCG because of similar changes to flock to another which is similar but not the same as the WCG before these changes took place. I wonder, how many in these organizations are proving all things said to them?

The reason I am writing is because I liked what you wrote and although I am not in agreement with everything, you do present a sincere desire to know "God's Truth" not mans.

Continued on next page

Please tell me more about your group, your mission statement and doctrinal beliefs and your goals for the future. Also, put me on your mailing list.

Thank you,

—A.G., New Jersey

RESPONSE: Our desire is much like yours, to understand the Eternal's Truth regardless of what we have believed for years. We believe the Bible is His word, we believe in doing His commandments, we believe in the need for a savior. When we study a subject, we write an article about it, but our list of subjects we would like to study is much longer than our list of subjects about we feel we have a thorough Biblical understanding.

We know of many Sabbath-keeping groups that appear to have a thorough understanding of almost everything. The only problem is, they don't agree. Some groups have researched certain subjects thoroughly, and seem to just give a "standard explanation" for others. As you so well pointed out, just because we learned a lot of provable, Biblical truth through Herbert Armstrong and his organization, it does not mean that everything taught was correct. Once we find someone that is right about some of our big questions, we think we can trust them for everything. Of course, the situation was compounded by leaders which in some cases told us that "God only works through one organization" and we must trust it or get out.

We thank you for your encouragement and welcome well-researched, spirit-guided study of others.

—Norman S. Edwards

What is "God's Work"?

LETTER: May 23, 1995

Thank you for sending *Servants' News*; it is a welcomed and informative newsletter.

Especially appreciated is the reprint of Herbert Armstrong's 1939 article. In addition, Mr Ray Wooten's letter and the article "Local Church Autonomy vs Central Control" offers your readers a truth that has been suppressed for years. Hopefully those who willingly and actively participate in the hierarchical form of control over God's elect will find food for thought here. I would like to offer a suggestion that may further enlighten God's people about which type of "system" or "government" would be best. This has to do with "God's Work," as it is phrased.

You stated in your article, "But be doers" on page 21, half way down in column three, that ; "The Eternal may well do his greatest work through groups. I noticed also in Vol. 1 No 1 of your newsletter other references to "God's Work" as being done by certain groups or people.

God's people are generally looking for where "God's Work" is being done in order for them to be able to support that effort. Yet nearly everyone and every "group" claim that they are doing "God's Work." One man in California claims that he is doing "the only end-time work of God." Its therefore very confusing and frustrating for someone looking for a church home to decide which group or which man is "doing God's Work."

My suggestion therefore is that you help your readers decide just where and with whom God is doing his "Work." Part of that information should of course include a definition as to what EXACTLY is "God's Work" in these end-times.

There are a number of excellent articles on the subject available. However I have found the taped messages and articles of Jim Rector to be the most concise and Biblically accurate of anyone's. I'm sure he would be glad to offer this information to your readers in helping them decide where and with whom "God's Work" is being done today.

Keep up the good work; it is a great service to these exiting tyrannical, overlord organizations calling themselves "Church of God."

Sincerely,

—R.P., Kansas City, MO

RESPONSE: Your point is well taken. An article answering the question, "What is God's Work" would be very helpful. Jim Rector is quite willing to share whatever publications he has with us, so we will make it available as soon as time allows. [Jim Rector may be contacted directly at the address given for Cornerstone Publications on page 6.]

We did a quick study of the subject and found that most descriptions of His work was something done in individual people (Mark 13:14, 1Cor 3:13-15, 15:58, 16:10, 2Cor 9:8, Gal 6:4, Phlp 1:6, 1Th 1:3, Heb 6:10, 1Pet 1:17, Rev 2:23, 3:1, 22:14). There are some references to specific jobs that specific people were given to do (John 4:34, 7:21, 17:4, Acts 13:2, 14:26, Eph 4:12, 2Tim 4:5). We find a few references to the Eternal's work as

a whole (Acts 13:41, Rom 9:8, 14:20).

We could not find any mention of the "work of a Church" or "work of a congregation" or "work" of a specific group of people. We never find the holy spirit given to a group, it is always given to individuals—who may attend a local congregation. It would have been more correct for us to say "The Eternal may well do his greatest work through individuals that are members of groups," rather than just "greatest work through groups." In any case, we were not trying to judge where the greatest work was done, but merely state that much good work had been done with people structured into a group. (The Eternal taught me much of the truth of the Bible through a radio broadcast supported by the contributions of a group of people.)

We would like to comment on your final paragraph. Most "Church of God" organizations are not "tyrannical overlords." If you read their foundational documents, they talk about love, fairness, adherence to Biblical principles, etc. It is the people that make them tyrannical. Some people spent years in "Church of God" groups and had the good fortune to work primarily with leaders that feared the Eternal and sought righteousness. Others were much less fortunate. Each will have to answer for what they have done.

"And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves through the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1Pet 1:17).

—Norman S. Edwards

Not Affiliated, but Attend

LETTER: May 31, 1995

Friends of the Brethren,

We have had the opportunity to see the newsletters and would very much like to receive them. We have recently discontinued all other religious publications because of the biased nature of most. Seeing your statement that you do not publish materials that attack individuals or organizations, or that claim there is only one human organization through which the Eternal works tells me that yours is a publication that could be very useful for personal growth.

Is the literature listed on the back cover of the April issue available? If so, I am interested in receiving "The Worldwide Church of God Splits:

Their Triumphs and Troubles" by Allen Ruth.

FYI, we have been members of the Body of Christ for nearly 25 years. My husband and I were married in the WCG, and have three children, the oldest of which just finished her freshman year at Ambassador University. Currently, we are not officially affiliated with any group, though we fellowship with a Sabbath-keeping church.

Thank you for this service you are providing. We look forward to receiving the newsletter!

—J. & S. B., Michigan

RESPONSE: All of the literature on the back cover is available free of charge. We see no need to be affiliated with a particular group, though everyone should endeavor to understand their spiritual gifts and to use them to serve in some way. That process often takes time. We need to understand our purpose, what gifts we have, and how and where we can best use them.

—Norman S. Edwards

Prayer Request for Healing

LETTER: May 23, 1995
Dear Norman,

Enclosed is a check to help you with your mailings. I have been inspired by your writings! Keep up the good work! Please keep in mind, too, that besides trying to read piles of literature we all are trying to make a living and trying to keep our heads above water in a culture that is rapidly sinking. Conciseness and pointedness will be very helpful in getting your views across. I don't view anything you've written as being wordy, but an effort to really get to the point on all matters is essential now.

My best friend, **Craig Hodkins of Kansas City**, is suffering from toxic onset diabetes due to his work in porcelain refinishing. He was also kicked out of his house by a "church member" [organization name and identity withheld] who renigged on a verbal agreement when more money could be bade due to appreciation of the property's value. Due to insulin caused tissue neuropathy, Craig can hardly walk. **He is homeless, jobless and in great pain.** He also has a wife and two daughters. He was self-employed and has no insurance and doesn't qualify for Social Security. Your prayers and maybe a small men-

tion in your newsletter would be much appreciated.

Craig stood up for the truth long ago and never accepted the error that so many have swallowed.

Your brother,

—L.W., Golden Colorado

RESPONSE: Thank you for the encouragement and the prayer request. We will keep your request for conciseness in mind. We hope our readers will join us in prayer for your friend. As James 5;16 says: "Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

—Norman S. Edwards

Sharing the Gospel Message

LETTER: June 10, 1995
Dear Norm,

Warm greetings to you and your family from me and my dear wife Carol.

We thank you most sincerely for the initiative that you and your small group have taken to inform, nourish and bring together many brethren who are scattered. Your non-partisan approach to recognizing and advertising the various efforts of others who are committed to serving God according [to] their understanding and conscience is especially appreciated. Most of us have been guilty of rallying behind the banner of a specific organization being convicted that this is where the truth is and that this is where God is doing His work, not willing to consider that God could be working somewhere else, too. When Elijah thought he was all alone in his commitment to God—the only one serving the true God—that very God informed him how mistaken he was. Whether or not Elijah simply failed to recognize the works of others or did not know of them at all, the reality was that 7,000 others had not bowed the knee to Baal and were witnesses to Yahweh. Your acknowledgment of this same reality today shows a balance and understanding that will do more to unite the body of Christ than organizations can ever hope to do.

The May issue of Servants' News with the 1939 article on church government by Herbert Armstrong puts the finger on a major cause of division—partisanism in an organizational structure straight out of Babylon! Perhaps the greatest service you will

do is to continue to make that article available and to promote its message to all those who must come out of Babylon if they are to avoid being part-takers of her plagues.

As time goes on there will be more and more people coming out of Her, Babylon, and like Elijah, they may begin to sense that they are all alone. But being all alone, being unable to enjoy regular fellowship, having a sense of isolation may not be so bad. The notion that most of us had that the bride was the Church, made up of local congregations where everyone enjoyed the camaraderie and togetherness which organizations provide is not supported by the Scriptures. A recent study I did revealed that the bride of Christ, who will have made herself ready by removing spot, wrinkle and blemish, will be gathered together to Zion, **one from a city and two from a family!** [Jer 3:14.] The elect will be gathered from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other [Zech 2:6, Matt 24:31, Mark 13:27]. From what I see, chances are more than good that the form of fellowship in the very end time will, at best, be through such endeavors as Friends of the Brethren, letter writing and the telephone.

Here is what brought about our sense of isolation: our commitment to share the gospel message. Our focus throughout our years in the WCG was to assist in the preaching of the gospel message throughout the world. Why? Nothing had changed our lives like the knowledge of God's purpose, that He was committed to bringing many sons and daughters to glory, and that He was going to establish a kingdom based upon the purest principles of righteousness which would bear fruit in spreading peace throughout the vastness of the universe forever. To come into harmony with this purpose was the most delightful, energizing, motivating, captivating, satisfying thing we could imagine. When Yahshua [Jesus] said that His Father had been working until now and that He had been working, and when He shared the knowledge of what they were working on, nothing was more fulfilling than to work with them. This we did under the leadership provided by Herbert Armstrong. There was never any doubt in our mind that He was committed to the

Continued on next page

great commission and to assist him financially and with prayers, in setting up PT news stands and anything else we could do was our joy. In the years since his death, however, the Father's business that was given into the trust of the saints has fallen by the way-side.

Because of the organizational structure in place when we came into the fellowship of the WCG, we had accepted the roll where we were cast as helpers of another who was spear-heading the work. Since Mr. Armstrong's death, as the scope of the work began to diminish steadily, we began to search for another whose arms we could help hold up. To our dismay we found none who would remain faithful to the great commission. Perhaps we needed to be more broad-minded about the preaching of the gospel, but from the standpoint of our conscience and our knowledge of the joy of the gospel message, we had to be faithful in declaring it and it alone. So it is that we, like many others, have had to separate from organizations so as to not cause division and to be faithful to our conviction.

We have characterized the things that Yahweh [God the Father] does, His works, and His ministries. When Yahshua was about His Father's business, He was about the ministries of Yahweh. He was an ambassador, a minister of the gospel, a promoter of His Father's purposes, a minister to the needs of people, a servant. The things that Yahshua did were the things He saw His Father do. The words He spoke were not His own words, but were the words His Father gave Him to speak. He performed the ministries of His Father Yahweh. This is what we see our responsibility to do, not to establish ourselves as an organization or to promote ourselves in any way, but to perform the ministries of our Father as they have been committed unto His people to discharge. We see as our injunction, or mandate, to share the gospel message with as many as we can, and then to help those who embrace it to learn to do the things Yahshua commanded, to be helpers of their joy, to help bring them into an everlasting fellowship with their Father and their Savior. In working toward this great commission we have published a booklet called GOD'S PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE. We would be delighted to share it with any

who are thinking of doing something similar in their locality. The understanding that we are to be so-doers does not permit us the option of standing by in idleness because we cannot find anyone deemed worthy whose arms we can help hold up. Our Christian stewardship is what we do with the talent, our Master's goods which have been given to us.

Again, Norm, to you and to your small band of helpers, thanks for your stewardship and your efforts to bring unity to the body of Messiah.

May the grace of the only true God be with you.

Your brother in Messiah,

—Fred McGovarin
R.R. 2 • Hastings, ON
Canada, K0L 1Y0

RESPONSE: Thank you for your long letter. You have mentioned several subjects that we would like to study and produce articles about. We would be interested in hearing more about your research. We will contact you about making your booklet available to *Servants' News* readers. May the Eternal bless you in your studies and your efforts to teach others.

—Norman S. Edwards

"We Needed Some Stirring Up"

LETTER: March 26, 1995
To: Friends of the Brethren

A friend lent me a copy of a newsletter they received. There's no date on it, but it talks of the Sabbath being holy, Pork Chops...?, Is there one right group..., etc. My husband found it encouraging as our Sabbath/Holy-day keeping church is being deceived and divided. But God is allowing the deception I think to test us to see who will continue to follow his truth or not. We needed some stirring up. It's caused me to recapture my first love and prove things again. I'm actually looking at the Passover service we do each year on the eve of the 14th. I'm wondering if that is the wrong night. Do you have any information or input according to scripture on the true Passover observance?

Enclosed is part of our tithe for the newsletter. We would like to continue receiving any encouraging letters as such. I really think God may be drawing more Sabbath groups together. Our church always taught we were the only true church. But God says the "Churches of God" are wherever His Spirit is guiding in

Truth.

Thank you,

—J. & P. M., Washington

RESPONSE: We have read several papers on the Passover and begun compiling one of our own, but it is not ready for publication yet. The major difficulties centers around whether the Old Testament lamb was slain at the beginning of the 14th or near the end of the 14th. In the New Testament, we must resolve the question of why the Messiah apparently ate the Passover one day before the Jews were eating it. There are difficult scriptures to explain no matter which approach one takes. Several papers claim that certain scriptures have been altered; almost all of them will point out several verses which they feel have been mis-translated in most English Bibles.

Unfortunately, many papers start by telling their readers that they are probably not going to be saved unless they are keeping the Passover according to the way specified within. This tends to raise emotions instead of helping us find the truth.

When we have information available on the Passover, we will put it in the literature section of *Servant's news*.

—Norman S. Edwards

Found a Place to Meet

LETTER: June 20, 1995
Mr. Edwards,

Thank you for your help a month or so back. I contacted Mr. Ritenbaugh and am very grateful I did so. I never realized the condition of the WCG until I received your news letters. They have been a big help for me. As I told you in our telephone conversation, I had not been able to attend services and couldn't get help from our minister. I feel like I am again a part of God's church. I receive a tape each week and also some literature. I am sending a small donation to you and pray that your services will be as helpful to others as they were to me. I would like to ask for a copy of *The WCG Splits* by Alan Ruth. I appreciate your approach of not attacking groups, organizations, or individuals.

May God bless your work as it helps others.

Thank you,

—L. F., North Carolina

RESPONSE: We are happy to help you find a fellow-servant.

—Norman S. Edwards

"God's True Church", from page 1
 Holy Spirit is. How can we determine where that is? By their **fruits** you will know them "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..." (Gal 5:22-23). This can be easily detected, simply by the first fruit of love. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1Jn 5:3). Learn God's law and search for others which obey it **in truth and in spirit**, and you will have found God's church.

As you are searching, remember James 2:10, "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all." If someone is knowingly, continually disobeying any part of the law, he is guilty of disobeying all of it.

Now that we have reestablished just what, why and where is God's Church, let us answer the three initial questions.

Whom do we trust? The answer is quite simple, we trust whom we have always trusted, God. God has imparted His spirit to us to understand truth (John 16:13). If we are again handed false teachings, we should know it through the Holy Spirit. If however, we feel that our trust should be in any person or group of persons, we most certainly will be deceived! Isn't that why so many have been so confused, because trust was in the leaders of a church organization—the very men themselves, and not in God? God has given us a "wake-up call." An important lesson is being taught. **If we don't learn the lesson, we will again find ourselves in the same position.**

Did not Mr. Armstrong make a habit of stating that we should not "take his word for it," but read for ourselves in God's Word? "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1Thes 5:10 KJV). Does it say "trust someone else to prove it for you?" Philippians 2:12 says "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Does it say trust someone else to do that for you? Our trust should be in God. We are personally responsible for what we choose to believe and follow. We should not reason, "Well it

sounds right." We are commanded to prove it ourself!

Which Church should we join?

There is only **one** true church! This is stated quite plainly throughout the Bible. Galatians 4:26-27, speaking of the church states: "but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written: 'Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who do not travail! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband.'" There is only one true Church, no daughter churches ever come out of her. The Church is referred to as a barren woman.

There have been no changes in the true Church of God (as far as where it is, what it is and who it is)!! There should be no confusion. God's church is still His called out, chosen ones and the body of Christ. The confusion lies in our own complacency on this subject. We speak of attending church, naming churches, etc. God's true Church is not attended. Rather the Church attends services at various buildings. One may say, "Well you know what I mean when I say I'm going to church." Yes, maybe we do, but if we continue to misuse the language, it may deceive us. The Bible does not use this language, rather it speaks of the Church congregations "coming together" for meeting. "And when they had come and gathered the church together..." (Acts 14:27). "...church that is in their house" (Rom 16:5, 1Cor 16:19, Phlm 2). "...when you come together as a church [not at a church]..." (1Cor 11:18).

God named His Church a very long time ago and that name still stands. Why is it then, that we choose names, such as the Worldwide Church of God, the Global Church of God, the United Church of God, or any number of other names? Our human governments would like each group to have a unique corporate name. Does this mean that God changes the name of his true Church? Of course not! It may be that the very reason God has allowed this tragedy in the leadership of the Worldwide Church of God to occur is to remind us of this simple truth about his Church. So these trivial changes of renaming, restructuring and so on do

not constitute the true Church, but rather are a matter of secular regulations. God is still conducting the same work through the same predestined and called-out people.

Each person who is called also has a purpose in his or her calling. Paul wrote, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant" (1Cor 12:1). Paul was instructing them not to be ignorant of their particular purpose in God's Church. As it has not worked well in the past to let one man or a very few men make all the leadership and doctrinal decisions, we should not think that allowing everyone to vote on every issue will solve the problem either. People that have certain gifts in each area should be making the decisions in that area.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of *all*: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually **as He wills**" (1Cor 12:7-11). Notice carefully **who** determines? Certainly not one head leader or the group as a whole, but as God determines.

"But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased" (1Cor 12:18). God will in due time reveal to each of us what our purpose in the Church is to be. We will need to pray and possibly cast lots when God's will for a particular gift is not clear (Acts 1:20-26). Be on guard, however, because Satan will also try to deceive you about your calling and thereby attempt to ruin the work of God. Paul warned about desiring gifts not given to us ("Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show

Continued on next page

"Why are there Divisions", from page 1 deceive **many** (not just a handful) (Matt 24:5). He said "Not everyone that says unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but He that doeth the will of my Father in heaven" (Matt 7:21). Paul wrote about people who profess to know God, but who deny Him by their actions (Tit 1:16). He predicted there would be false ministers masquerading as true ministers—just as Satan himself pretends to be an angel of light (2Cor 11:14).

Where are these **many** false ministers today? Where are those who are Christians in name only? Certainly, if there were false brethren in Paul's day, there would be many more so today. And there are.

Of course, it's not our responsibility to play judge and try to figure out who is and isn't a Christian. We don't need to judge every minister. Only God can look at the heart (Rom 14). We simply need to make sure **we** are personally right before God; we should be careful about whom we fellowship with, and about what ministers we look to for spiritual guidance and leadership! We must judge what influences we allow into our minds; but we don't need to judge the spiritual lives of others who have no direct relationship to us. However, we can be sure that much of the confusion in the church comes from false

Christians—false ministers, who profess Jesus for whatever reason, but who are not filled with the Holy Spirit.

But what about the divisions and differences among true Christians?

To understand why there are factions even among true children of God, we must take a look at the church during its first 40 or 50 years of existence. If there was ever a time when we would expect the Church to be unified, it would be at the beginning! However, we don't have to read much of the New Testament to see that from its very inception, the Church was plagued by divisive problems—there were personality differences, administrative disagreements and doctrinal disputes.

The church at Corinth is, perhaps, the classic example. Paul wrote to them, "...are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not mere men?" (1Cor 3:4.) Confusion and excesses characterized their assemblies (1Cor 11 & 14). They were certainly divided.

In the late forties A.D., Jewish Christians "of the sect of the Pharisees" had tried to force the law of Moses on Gentile Christians. The controversy grew to the point that Paul and others went to Jerusalem for a big conference (Acts 15). The apostles and elders all came to agreement and the matter seemed settled for a time; but undoubtedly there were many who didn't exactly go along with the final conclusion. In fact, some time later, Christians from Jerusalem intimidated Peter to withdraw from eating with Gentiles at Antioch. Paul had a confrontation with him in front of the whole group! Strong words were spoken! Feelings were hurt. Emotions were involved. Things weren't all harmonious and smooth in the Church (Gal 2:11-12).

The picture of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 is one of differences. The Ephesians were commended for exposing false apostles, yet as a whole, they had lost their first love. Within the church at Pergamos were those who permitted the teachings of the Nicolaitans—others in the church

did not. Some of the Thyatirans regarded Jezebel as a prophetess, others did not. At Sardis, many were spiritually dead. The differences existed both within each church as well as among the seven.

The record of the New Testament certainly does not reveal the kind of unity and harmony that many Christians long for today! Obviously, God is not the promoter of confusion and disharmony (1Cor 14:33,40), but is it possible that He uses it to accomplish His will? Is it possible that He never intended the Church to be completely united in theology and organization? After all, He could have spelled out doctrines in minute detail—leaving no room for different interpretations. He could have laid down precise rules for Christian conduct. He could have set up a rigid administrative structure to assure "proper" leadership and harmony within a worldwide church organization!

But He didn't! Why!?

Because, I believe, a completely unified church in the human realm would produce results exactly the opposite of the ones God wants in His true children!

Consider some of the possible consequences of a unified, universal church. Human beings are very security conscious; they want to enjoy the comforts of a solid, stable environment with established social contacts. A huge, united church that provided such a warm haven would be very full—full of people who had no personal relationship with God. Parishioners would look to the human church leaders instead of to God for ultimate guidance and security.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I think there must be heresies among you that those who are spiritual may be revealed" (1Cor 11:19). Controversy separates the "men" from the "boys." It causes the "hangers on" to become disenchanted and disillusioned, but it helps true Christians to grow in their personal relationship with God. Doctrinal conflict in the church confuses many, but it forces true Christians to think—it forces them to look to God and His Word for

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you a more excellent way (1Cor 12:29-31) If your gift is not to teach, should you seek to be in charge of or to vote on doctrine? We need to use our spiritual gifts, but not exceed them.

Which group is God working with? God is working with His group! God is not working with any man-made name, organization or any other aspect simply to comply with laws of our land. God is doing the same work he always has been doing with the same called-out group. God has not changed! "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). He has simply allowed a crisis which has made us look again into His Truth, Truth that is plain, yet often forgotten.

—C.B.

spiritual direction—instead of to an organization.

When Paul wrote to the Romans, he could easily have straightened out their differences by telling them **the truth** in each area of controversy. **But he didn't!** Rather, he told them, "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another...Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Rom 14:13,15 NIV). Paul knew that Christians learn to love and respect one another by accepting differences without judging.

If every doctrine were spelled out so precisely that there would be no room for different interpretations, Christians would tend to go to sleep intellectually—they would stop thinking and learning—they would stop using their God-given minds. Christianity would become a "cook-book" religion (just blindly follow the recipes for every situation) and "babes in Christ" would never grow up to spiritual adulthood.

As it is, the Bible spells out clearly the essentials of salvation and of God's will for man. But it provides considerable latitude for Christians to mature spiritually—by making decisions—by learning to apply God's will in their lives. Jesus learned obedience through the things that He suffered (Heb 5:8) and Christians learn the same way—through experience, through problems and suffering, through controversy, and uncertainty and adversity.

When we see Christians scattered among various organizations, when we see differing opinions and controversies in the Church, we tend to look at the problems they cause and get discouraged. But God can also see the growth taking place in His children and He rejoices. For He wants His true Children to be clean, white, and mature. And so they will be—refined in the fires of controversies, differences and problems—including those within the Church. So while we pray and work for love and harmony among true Christians, let us not despair when we see divisions in the Church—for God is using them to accomplish His great purpose.

How to Find the True Church

How does an individual find a congregation with which to attend? Should he obtain the "statement of beliefs" of as many organizations as possible and determine from them which is the "true" church?

Jesus said, "...I will build my church; and the gates of hell [*hades*, grave] shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18); and He did build it on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20). But from its earliest days, the church had its problems. The Corinthians permitted sin, had divisions, got carried away with their spiritual gifts. The Christians at Rome had problems judging one another. The Galatians were being led from the true Gospel to a legalistic system. Some of the Thessalonians thought Jesus' return was so imminent they quit working. And almost all of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 had serious problems—false doctrines, false prophets and teachers, sinners, paganism, non-Christians in their midst, or they were just deadbeats.

Suppose you had been traveling around back then, in search of the one true church organization, armed with the following list of criteria:

- perfect doctrines (assuming, of course, that yours are perfect)
- total dedication and zeal
- perfect harmony and respect among members
- no sinners or non-Christians

You could travel from Jerusalem to Galatia to Rome—probably to every congregation mentioned in the New Testament—and you would not be able to find the true Church based on your criteria.

Many people have searched for the true Church today and have given up in frustration; some conclude that the Bible must be all mixed up and maybe God doesn't really exist. Others reason that, since the true Church doesn't exist, they'll have to start it. Or they fall prey to the cults and cult-like churches who claim that they are the one true Church. Millions have cast aside family, friends, jobs, even the Word of God for the false sense of

warmth and security offered by organizations claiming to be the one true Church.

Well, thank God, the complete membership roll of the Church is found only in heaven, not in the computer of any organization on earth. For the true Church is the sum total of all people who have the Spirit of God—who have accepted Jesus as Savior, Lord, and Master, who have become God's children. These true Christians are not all found in one organization on this earth, just as they were not in apostolic times. They do have their problems and faults, their misunderstandings, some pagan influences, sin and sinners, false doctrines and even false ministers—just as they did back then. But in spite of all these problems, true Christians are scattered on this earth and the one true Church does exist.

Do you want to find it?

Don't look around you! Rather, look up! Develop a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the Head of the one true Church. Get to know Him and to love Him. **For in Him you will find the one true Church!**

Once you become part of God's Church, you can and should look around for other Christians with whom you can fellowship (Heb 10:25), for spiritual elders, pastors, and teachers who can help you grow spiritually (Eph 4:11-13), and for Christians with whom you can cooperate in sharing the Gospel. You should look for ministers and brethren who are zealous and dedicated to God, who serve and obey His will, **including the Fourth Commandment**, who aren't encumbered with a lot of pagan practices and false doctrines.

Finding Christians like that can be a real challenge, but with God all things are possible. And it is a lot easier knowing that you're not looking for the one true church. You've already found it—in Jesus Christ; and you've already become part of it through your personal relationship with Him.

—Richard A. Wiedenheft



FIRST CLASS

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Literature List

Friends of the Brethren is making a wide range of literature available from a variety of sources. We have received many items and are still reading, editing, formatting and printing them. (We have mailed all known requests more than three days old, so please let us know if you have asked for something and did not receive it.)

We accept literature that does not attack individuals and organizations, does not hold up one group as superior to all others, and contains no obvious Biblical or logical errors. Please write or call about your ideas.

The Apple of God's Eye by Jim Rector, 13 pages.

God's love for us is far greater than we imagine and we often take it for granted.

Assembling on the Sabbath by Norman Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.

A Call to Arms by Jim Rector, 16 pages. Valuable lessons we can learn *for today* from Revelation 2 and 3.

Does the New Covenant Do Away with the Letter of the Law? by Eric V. Snow. 32 pages. A "must read" for those that feel it does.

Did Christ Reorganize the Church? by Herbert W. Armstrong written in 1939. 8 pages. Very different than his later-years approach: Christ never authorized a hierarchical government.

Friends of the Brethren Statement of Income and Expenses, 2 pages. (Automatically sent to contributors)

The Heart of the Matter by Jim Rector, 31 pages. Our calling is to spiritual growth, not just attendance, socializing, politeness or legalism.

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today's congregations.

The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles by Allen Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of church history.

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