

# Servants' NEWS

Vol. 2, No. 5

A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be

June 1996

## Pastor Resigns from WCG: Against the Leadership, Not Doctrine

*Resignation Letter by David Covington*

Dear Pastor [General Joseph] Tkach: May 11, 1996  
Thank you for the opportunity to help present the 1995-96 Worldwide Church of God (WCG) ministerial regional conferences. I facilitated 24 groups on spiritual healing for over 600 ministers and their wives at sites in Oklahoma, California, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Oregon and Illinois. The feedback has been excellent, both from the workshops and my 100-page *Living Grace-Fully* sermon series on the healing of the gospel. Based on a post-workshop survey, 75% "strongly agreed" and 22% "agreed" that addressing incidents of spiritual abuse was effective in establishing a need for healing. I have heard their stories, well over 100 incidents of spiritual abuse, both past and present. I have counseled and prayed with some and cried with others. And, many ministers have conveyed to me that they feel trapped by the current system, but are afraid to speak up.

Since September 1994, I have corresponded at length with you and your

father on a number of issues regarding manipulative tithing, legalism and our freedom in Christ. My 18-page paper outlined a plan for a "Ministry of Healing" (January 1995) toward becoming a healthy Christian church

**Continued  
Page  
4**

### Why This Letter is Important

The article at left is the recent resignation letter of David Covington, a former minister of the Worldwide Church of God. He is essentially Protestant in his theology and agrees with nearly all of the doctrinal changes made in the WCG. His articles have been featured in the WCG's Plain Truth magazine. Yet, he gave up his job. What led him to make his decision?

He lists **nine fundamental problems with the WCG**. We, at *Servants' News*, **agree with everyone of them**. In summary, the problems are a self-seeking and authoritarian management rather than an emphasis on members establishing a positive relationship with the Father and His Son. While we may not agree with all of Covington's solutions, it is hard to deny his statement of the problems. He has been working among the WCG leadership long enough to know. This article should be helpful not only to Worldwide Church of God members, but also to members of the many groups who have split off of that organization. Nearly all of these groups have preserved much of the truth once taught by the WCG, but most of them also preserved the problems that David Covington addresses.

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

- 2 God is Light
- 3 The Messiah is to Lead us
- 15 The Church and Salvation
- 16 News from Local Congregations
- 18 Letters
- 26 Feast Sites of Many Groups

## Grace Vs. Works?

by Eric V. Snow

Does the Bible contradict itself?

Consider the message of Galatians 2:16: "[T]hat we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified" (NASB throughout, unless otherwise noted). So then—works have nothing to do with salvation. But what about Matthew 19:17: "[B]ut if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments"? Or Hebrews 5:9: "And having been made perfect, He [Jesus] became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." So what then—are works a condition for salvation in the latter verses, but not in Galatians?

First of all, to solve this seeming contradiction, we must realize that justification is not the same thing as salvation. Surprising? Consider Romans 5:9: "Much more then, having now been justified [past tense] by His blood, we shall be saved [future tense] from the wrath of God through Him." Justification, meaning the wiping away of all past sins, has already occurred in Christians' lives when we repent-

(Continued on Page 11)

# God Is LIGHT

BY JERRY LAWS

# Servants' NEWS

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There is a spiritual maturity revealed in simplicity. This spiritual maturity enables one to see daylight and darkness, truth and error, right and wrong. When one is Spirit-filled and Spirit-empowered it's easy to see vital moral distinctions.

We find in I John 1:5-10 the theme, the test and the terms all relating to holiness. Verse 5 gives us the theme.

There's no definite article here—not God is the light—but a simple affirmative: God is light. One's character is determined by the character of the object of his affections. Your life reflects what you really believe. If God is the object of your affections through Jesus Christ, your life exudes light. If not, your life exudes darkness.

If mankind is to reflect a Christ-like holiness, it begins with the proper understanding and concept of God. Maybe the moral decay of our times can be traced to this point.

Many of us may believe that God's blessings can be equated with material prosperity. I suppose, if there is a sin in our city and church, it is this sin. We're wrong about God. We've convinced ourselves that our material possessions reflect the presence and blessings of God. When we start with an erroneous premise we reach erroneous conclusions. If you believe God has blessed you simply because you are wealthy or because you have an adequate amount of this world's goods, then you will reach some false conclusions in life. Material prosperity, money in the bank and destructive spiritual weakness are proof that we're in a state of dormancy with the one true God who is light. If everyone served Him, our lives would exude His light and strength, and not the moral weakness evident today.

In the beginning of creation, one of God's first creative acts was to bring light into existence. As you study and trace this theme, we find that it was a pillar of fire or light which symbolized the presence of God to the children. It was a burning bush, which was giving of light, that proved to Moses the abiding presence of God in his life and in that society. The fire which fell on Mt. Sinai spoke of God's nearness and interest in the affairs of men in the time of Elijah. The dazzling brightness of that luminous cloud over the mercy seat in the temple spoke of the presence of God. All through the Bible, God is light.

The theme continues in an unbroken line. Even when Christ was born there was the brilliance and light of a star that led the wisemen to the place where God in Christ came into the world.

Jesus said "I am the light of the world." It's in the light that moral imperfections and spiritual deviations are revealed. "God is light," John writes. When God needed the services of a foremost intellectual and articulate spokesman, He revealed Himself in the dazzling incandescence of His shekinah glory to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road.

God is light. All of the affairs of men shall be ultimately closed and the Lord shall gather His own around His throne of grace forever. The Book of Revelation tells us that the Lamb, who is Jesus, will be the light. The sun will shine no more nor will the moon or stars. Jesus will be the light. What a glorious theme from Genesis all the way to the Revelation.

It's truly the theme of the Book, "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness." Where ever there is darkness in our lives, it is a revelation of the fact that we are not following Him too closely. To walk in darkness is to lie, and truth is not there.

The gospel is a command to **do** as well as to **tell**. If a person knows Jesus, their conduct will substantiate their claim. You can test your belief by the results of your belief. Fellowship with God, who is light, is a moral fellowship based on meeting moral conditions and issuing moral results. If the results are not present, something is missing back down the line. If the results aren't evident, the fellowship isn't what it should be. If you say you have fellowship with Him and don't have the fruit to prove it, you are deceiving yourself.

If you turn on a light switch in your home and the light doesn't come on, yet other lights on the same circuit will burn, you know it's not the fault of the power but of the outlet. I think we can make that applica- **(Continued on Page 10)**



*Servants' News* is published monthly except for combined March/April and September/October issues. Subscriptions are free to people interested in obeying their Creator as described in the Bible. We believe His law is the basis for living a life pleasing to Him and living at peace 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, accept the salvation provided through our Savior and strive to live "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Deut 8:3).

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**Editor & Publisher:** Norman S. Edwards

**Production Editor:** Norman A. Brumm, III

**Associate Editors:** Marleen Edwards,  
Phyllis Brumm, Robert & Christine  
Feith, Jeanne Ireland

**Contributors:** Many! "Thanks" to everyone involved!

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*Servants' News*

PO Box 6516

Springdale, AR 72766-6516

Phone: 501-872-1003

Fax: 501-872-1004

E-Mail: 75260.1603@CompuServe.com

Subscription and literature requests may also be sent to these addresses:

**Canada:** Servants' News, R.R. #2,  
Hastings, Ontario, K0L 1Y0

**Scotland:** Steve Little, 14 Roman Camp,  
Broxburn, West Lothian EH52 5PJ  
Phone: 01506 853822

**Australia:** Dale Heslin, 9 Alice Jackson  
Crescent, Gilmore, ACT 2905

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# THE MESSIAH Is To Lead Us

One of the most difficult things for us to do as Christians is to let the Messiah lead us. Jesus Christ has promised to do exactly that. He has promised to guide and direct each and every one of us every single day. He has promised in the Scriptures **to fulfill a number of separate functions, each one distinct, each one important.**

These promises are unalterably ours. Paul reminds us in Heb 13:5-6 "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what can man do to me?'"

Jesus is the one who **begins the salvation process** in us. He guides us each and every day to guarantee that our salvation continues on course. Then at the end of our lives He ensures that we obtain the reward that has been set before us. Our salvation is certain through Jesus Christ. In Heb 12:2 we read that we are to look "...unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God."

It is hard for many of us to comprehend how Jesus can possibly lead every one of us. With so many people in the Church of God, how can He possibly lead each of us individually? How can He guide your life, my life, and eventually the lives of millions of others? He can and He does!

**Leading us to salvation** is one of the Messiah's main responsibilities. He literally walks with us every minute of every day. Because He walks with us daily, He is aware of every need, He knows every detail of every trial, and He knows how and when to intercede in your life and my life. Our victory is guaranteed through Jesus Christ! In I Cor 15:57 we read "Thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

The Father has placed us in the hands of the Messiah. It is the Father who has purposed that Jesus should

lead us to salvation. We pray to the Father, but the Father answers our prayers by having Jesus Christ lead and direct the events in our lives. There is no conflict between the Father and Jesus Christ. Our care and our salvation have been delegated to Jesus Christ. The Father "...raised Him (Jesus) from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come (Eph 1:20-21)." The Father "...put all things under His (Jesus') feet, and gave Him (Jesus) to be head over all things, to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Eph 1:22)."

Jesus takes the responsibility given to Him by the Father seriously. He takes a leadership role in our lives and in the Scriptures He defines His relationship with us. He tells us we are His friends. He tells us that He is the captain of our salvation. He calls us His brothers and sisters. He is our minister. He intercedes for us and gives us help as a faithful ever present High Priest. This is how the Father wants us to relate to His first born Son, Jesus Christ. Let's look at each one of these relationships in more detail.

Jesus is **your friend and my friend**. Jesus tells each of us "You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard of My Father, I have made know to you (John 15:14-15)."

Jesus Christ is the **Captain of our salvation**. We are His comrades. It is a very real leadership role. "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings (Heb 2:10)."

**We are His brothers and sisters**. That is a very close personal relationship. We share in the same Spirit. As an older brother, we follow Him as He uniquely directs each of our lives. In

Heb 2:17 we read "... In all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest to things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

He is a **High Priest** to every man and woman in the assembly (Heb 4:14-15; 8:1).

The Messiah **provides help** in times of trouble. That help comes whenever it is needed, which means that Jesus must be with us every single minute of every day! "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Heb 2:18)".

Jesus doesn't help us because it is His job, nor does He help us out of obligation. The Messiah helps us because He deeply loves us! We need to understand just how great His love is! In Eph 3:17-19 we read that Jesus Christ is to "... dwell in your hearts through faith; that you (each individual), being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

By walking with the Messiah each and every day we learn to look to Him as a faithful loving friend. We grow to understand His love. As we learn to follow the Messiah over a period of months and years, we personally come to know Jesus Christ and the depth of His love!

Jesus promises **to give a unique spiritual power** to every man and woman in the assembly. In Eph 3:20 we read "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the assembly by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

He is **our Apostle**, the "one sent" to faithfully carry out His mission (Heb 3:1-2).

One of the most damaging things about a hierarchical form of church government is that it does not allow

**Continued on page 4**

**"Messiah" from page 3**

Jesus Christ to be a close friend to each member of the Assembly. In a hierarchy the local minister is often accessible only on a formal basis. Men at higher levels are less and less accessible; the average member may have no reliable way of communicating with the human head of an organization. People often seem to assume that since the Messiah is "one step higher," He is even less accessible than the head of their organization.

A "local elder" or "deacon" often assumes the personal leadership role that Jesus Christ is to have. He rules the people, he answers all their questions. People learn to rely on him and to take comfort in his wisdom, strength, and friendship. People in a hierarchy don't have the need to walk with Jesus daily because they are relying on a man for their help.

Many of us in the Churches of God lived under a hierarchy. We too often developed an improper relationship with a minister and so now we have difficulty developing a close friendship with the Messiah. We need to learn to walk with our elder brother, Jesus Christ. He is our minister. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. for we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:14-16)."

It is all right for us to comfort one another. It is good for elders to give advice and provide encouragement. But the Messiah expects us to be His friends. Jesus Christ desires to directly intervene on our behalf. We need to be sure and steadfast in our resolve to look to Jesus. "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 6:19-20)."

**We must learn to let the Messiah lead us!**

—Toli Bohonik

**"Pastor Resigns" from page 1**

and served as a foundation for the present series of conferences. In August 1995, Greg Albrecht, editor of the *Plain Truth*, Norman Shoaf and I met in Pasadena to plan our conference sessions. As a listed contributing writer for the *Plain Truth*, I am featured on page 1 of the current May/June 1996 issue with the cover article, "The Healing Ministry of Jesus." The February issue contained my article, "Burdened by Debt," and I have two more articles scheduled for later this year, "Lazarus Unwound," with Roger Ludwig (Sept/Oct), and "Recovering from Spiritual Abuse," (Nov/Dec).

In my paper I suggested utilizing respected and qualified field ministers to facilitate workshops at the conferences. However, you chose me because of my masters degree in counseling and in-depth research on spiritual abuse. In fact, I was also chosen, along with Larry Omasta, to produce a spiritual abuse video for sale in the *Plain Truth*, and I have completed a sermon message on Romans 10:9, one of seven lectionaries to be distributed nationwide for speakers to give at this year's festival of tabernacles.

I write the preceding to demonstrate that I am not a disgruntled pastor, but, rather, a person favored by your administration and well acquainted with the significant problems of the WCG. I grew up in this fellowship; it has been my home for 25 years. I have been employed full-time in the ministry for five years. In this past year, I have had opportunities to interact with the vast majority of U.S., Canadian and Caribbean field ministry, and to have numerous private discussions with you, Mike Feazell, director Church Administration, and Greg Albrecht. These interactions have led me to a painful conclusion:

Your administration shows no willingness to address the core, most damaging cultic aspects of the WCG system. **As a result, I must resign from the full-time ministry. I am encouraging WCG congregations to hold open forums to prayerfully consider local incorporation, local governance, and local maintenance of funds. Where that is not possible, I am encouraging members to leave and join healthy Christian churches where they can find help and healing.** This is not a decision I have reached lightly, nor is it one I desired. However, after 19 months of addressing these issues with your administration, it became apparent that I was actually enabling a sick system that does not

desire genuine change for Jesus. After I returned from the Portland conference in March 1996, the Holy Spirit convicted me to confront openly your administration's on-going problems.

This is not against you. I love Mr. Albrecht, appreciate Mr. Feazell's efforts and validate what you have tried to accomplish. Yet, you have implemented these changes through our historically abusive dynamics. In your present position, I am convinced you aren't even capable of seeing, much less addressing, the genuine problems. I compare the 1996 WCG to a husband who used to beat his wife seven days a week and now has cut back to four. And, the wife is supposed to be satisfied with his progress! Worse, still, he's holding seminars on domestic violence! Your administration continues to be abusive, but you hold spiritual healing conferences. I can no longer accept this!

**Two Legs of Abusive System: Hierarchy and Legalistic Rules**

I shared with you at dinner in Atlanta (January 8, 1996) how I asked Ken Blue, author of *Healing Spiritual Abuse*, what symptoms might indicate one was in a spiritually abusive group. His response: "The first thing you look for is a *hierarchy*. In the New Testament we are all brothers. There are no number ones, twos and threes. . . . The second thing I would look for is an emphasis on rules and regulations rather than on a relationship with Jesus" (*Plain Truth* interview, December 20, 1995).

The abusive organization has two major empowering dynamics, two legs which work interdependently: an authoritarian hierarchy and legalistic rules. In the many stories of spiritual abuse that have been related to me, both historic and on-going situations, the main problem has been one of your pyramidal-style government with its concomitant lack of true accountability. Without addressing these fundamental structural issues, the doctrinal changes of the past five years seem merely cosmetic.

Over a year ago (February 17, 1995), when I addressed with Greg Albrecht my perception that the changes were superficial in nature and that structural change was needed, I was told I ought to consider the incredible distance the WCG has come and what other Christians are calling a miracle. You yourself often refer to the changes in the WCG as having magnitude of historic proportions.

In their book, *The Subtle Power of*

*Spiritual Abuse*, David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen describe the way in which the spiritually abused person fails to compare his/her situation to "normal" and thus is appeased with occasional adjustments *toward* normal. "If a victim does compare their situation to *normal*, they would be able to see how many unhealthy adjustments they have made and how really abnormal and unhealthy the relationship has become" (p. 186). Janis Hutchinson lists "periodic accommodations" as a basic strategy and principle of cults to placate their members and/or society, when necessary (*Out of the Cults and Into the Church*, p. 128).

However, the dramatic extent of the WCG's doctrinal shift toward orthodoxy has indeed led some outsiders to believe genuine repentance was taking place in this group. You have often mentioned Hank Hanegraaff and Ruth Tucker in this vein, as well as, of course, the article in *Christianity Today*, "Road to Orthodoxy" (Oct. 2, 1995). These observers cannot possibly understand what it is like to be a member of this church. They miss the dynamics of this system which remain abusive.

I believe strongly the changes that have occurred thus far are what cybernetically-oriented family therapists would call "first-order change," "in which the family changes some behaviors but those behaviors are still governed by the same [dysfunctional] rules" (*Family Therapy*, Nichols & Schwartz, p. 94). Your assertion that the church is now here to serve the membership and not the other way around seems characteristic of past propaganda given the lack of "second-order change," that is basic change in the structure and functioning of the system (ibid, p. 594). The following are fundamental areas I believe the WCG must change to become a healthy Christian church (if that is even possible):

**Nine Fundamental Problems**

1. Authoritarian hierarchy: Totalistic nature; "Pastor General" all-powerful.
2. Lack of accountability: "Pastor General" legally accountable to none.
3. Closed communication: Open and honest discussion still thwarted by structure.
4. Manipulative tithing: Current heavy emphasis seems characteristic of past exploitation.
5. Financial control: Congregations still send 100% of their donations to headquarters.

6. Local congregations not a true priority: E.g. \$250 million campus sale proceeds.
7. Chaos and confusion: Jesus lost among ever-changing policies, programs and crisis.
8. Lack of respect for members/ministry: Current administrative approach condescending.
9. WCG organization most important, more than Jesus or people: Corporation 1st, church 2nd.

Theologically, the WCG still rejects the doctrine of eternal punishment, holds observances on the Jewish sabbath and festivals (unleavened bread, atonement, festival of tabernacles), and teaches as doctrine the debatable matter of post-mortem evangelization (or divine perseverance). It is true you have ostensibly accepted orthodox Christianity on core issues including the Trinity and salvation by grace. Yet, without accompanying sociological and structural changes in the aforementioned areas, I believe the spiritually abusive system continues, and doctrinal reversals on core issues are not only possible, but likely.

Almost all the doctrinal issues now being discussed were reviewed during the 1970's by WCG administration and suppressed when Herbert Armstrong put the church "back on track." This is likely to occur again. Note the following curious excerpt from a recent WCG ministerial journal: "We ought to view all human knowledge, including our own doctrinal positions, as always subject to correction. Anything else is clearly not supported by the NT and flirts with the notion of infallibility" ("WCG & American Mainstream," *Reviews You Can Use*, May-June 1995, p. 19). It would appear you are already heading down this road, with continued double-speak regarding tithing and festivals.

**1. Authoritarian Hierarchy: Totalistic Nature; "Pastor General" All-Powerful**

Originally, Herbert Armstrong condemned the very approach that would later characterize his administration. In 1939, he wrote, ". . . There is NO BIBLE AUTHORITY for an . . . organization with authority over the local congregations!" (*The Good News*, Feb., p. 5). In spite of this, he would eventually develop an authoritarianism which cannot be disputed (*Another Gospel*, Ruth Tucker, p. 197). In an article "God Restored These 18 Truths [to HWA & the WCG]," the following is listed as first:

"...government of God. When

Christ comes, He will restore God's government to the whole earth. So you can be sure the one to come in the spirit and power of Elijah would restore God's government in His Church. When Mr. Armstrong came among the Oregon Conference ... the church had ... the law, the Sabbath and the tithing system. But they also had a government of men, with a bi-annual conference, voting just like they do in the world" (*Worldwide News*, 1986).

However, while at least ten of these 18 "truths" have been comprehensively dealt with in WCG literature as heretical, your current administration has not addressed the "government of God" with the same zeal. When I confronted Greg Albrecht about this problem (February 17, 1995), he stated that you would not have been able to accomplish what you have without your [power] [sic] structure. At the conference in Portland, Oregon, at the end of March 1996, he reiterated that point saying he and Mike Fezell had just discussed this matter. He said, "We are using the 'old factory,' to build the new one." I do not believe the end justifies the means, and neither would Arterburn or Felton. Their book, *Toxic Faith*, lists ten characteristics of a toxic church, number two of which is authoritarianism. They write:

"Often a strong leader mistakes the position of leadership for a position free from accountability. The leader will set up a toxic faith system that allows for free rein.... There may be a board of directors, ... but when the authoritarian ruler picks them, he ... picks people who are easily manipulated and easily fooled. What appears to be a board of accountability is a rubber-stamp group that merely gives credibility to the leader's moves.... Then when a practice is called into question such as an extremely high salary, the persecuting dictator justifies it by saying the board made the decision or approved it" (p. 169).

Recently, this was demonstrated at a conference when one minister asked if the salaries of WCG "top executives" could be disclosed. The response:

"Would depend on the board's decision ... What's to be gained? Is there a down side? Would certain areas of the country be not able to properly judge?" ("Q & A," Bernie Schnippert, Harrisburg, March 10, 1996; Pastor Gilbert's notes circulated on e-mail.)

In other words, the basic legal and financial structure of the church remains unchanged. Herbert Armstrong, "a corpo-

rate sole," was in total control and legally empowered to make the final decision on everything, despite any degree of opposition. That system was passed on to your father and then to you. The most blatant example of recent date appeared last Summer in a church publication:

"And if that should ever happen [the pastor general should die and be succeeded by another], if you want to get into God's kingdom, you will follow that pastor general.... And your eternity depends on that. Everyone of you. Don't forget it....' One teaching they have forgotten to preserve [those who have left], though, is this final admonition of Mr. Armstrong: `You will follow that pastor general....'" ("Recalling the final sermon of Herbert W. Armstrong," *Worldwide News* (WWN), Clayton Steep, p. 4, July 4, 1995).

Also, last Summer, and not coincidentally, approximately 140 ministers left this fellowship. I do not believe doctrinal differences were their only motivation. It was also the fact that your administration was unwilling to discuss these issues in open forum. Your decisions had to be accepted. Such is the case in a military-style, top-down structure of authoritarian hierarchy, a system that fosters arrogance.

The following is needed: ***Dismantle the totalistic hierarchy and establish a recognized structure with a system of checks and balances, perhaps an elected board that could remove the "pastor general" given certain grounds such as mismanagement, abuse, spiritual or moral problem, etc.***

**2. Lack of Accountability: "Pastor General" Legally Accountable to None**

Your administration is establishing a system whereby field ministers will be held accountable through regional pastors and performance reviews. You have even invited H. B. London of Focus on the Family to speak at our ministerial field conferences on this issue. But, as yet, you have failed to communicate the message that you are accountable. *Toxic Faith* characteristic #9 is lack of objective accountability:

"Lack of accountability is a clear sign of lack of faith in God and the presence of a faith in self built on self-assertion and ego. When toxic faith comes under scrutiny, the religious leader reacts predictably: 'I am accountable only to God....' When a religious addict makes this assertion, people should clear out of that ministry if change is not implemented immediately" (p. 183-184).

I have not heard you make the statement "I am accountable only to God," nor do I believe you would do so. But, in actuality, to whom are you legally accountable? It would seem no one. A publication critical of the WCG recently published an alleged, smuggled copy of WCG by-laws (*Ambassador Report*, April 1995) which, in essence, list the pastor general as the sole-owner of the organization. Of course, this is impossible to verify since the by-laws are not available to the ministry or membership.

If this copy is accurate, not only are your decisions final, but the assets of the church belong exclusively to you. That amount of total power results in abuse. Perhaps it could be a benevolent dictatorship if everyone agreed, but you have made numerous, significant and controversial decisions, doctrinal, administrative and financial, without meaningful discussion or consensus of any kind. I realize that would not have been easy, but the gospel demands it. The New Testament contains a lot of emphasis on the importance of leadership, but never without accountability. Otherwise it becomes abusive.

Of course, without accountability no such consensus is necessary. Not only can 140 ministers leave the fellowship in disagreement without repercussions to you, but tens of thousands of members as well. You stated the following in March 1996:

"We've been split in half ... 30-35,000 attending splinter groups ... another 30,000 going no where.... When you look over the long haul, you will find that half that [sic] have ever attended with us have left.... That's a very poor ratio for a church.... Over 100 splinter groups ... *that alone should have told us that something was wrong* [italics mine]" (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, March 9, 1996; Pastor Gilbert's notes circulated on e-mail.)

It should indeed have told us something was wrong. But, it goes much deeper than doctrine. The structure and dynamics were, and continue to be, abusive. During dinner in Portland, Oregon, with you, Mike Fezell, Greg Albrecht, and Janis Hutchinson, I was surprised to hear Ruth Tucker make the statement that you (the leadership) had completely changed the whole course of the church on its membership. To my best recollection, Greg Albrecht replied "we can't say that because there might be a lawyer present." Dr. Tucker replied, "but, that is what you've done, isn't it?" As I wrote your father in December 1994, "no one

can ever obligate, demand or require us into ... walking according to the Spirit.... The Spirit does not work in that way.... You simply cannot arm-twist people into agreement...."

The other rationalization I have often heard is that patience is necessary. "It is going to take time to dismantle the legal structure, to sell the campus, etc." If you are not willing to make yourselves accountable at a time when you need members' financial support, what will be your incentive when you have the 250 million dollars of campus sale proceeds? Certainly, there is a time for patience, but are we supposed to believe the WCG leadership just isn't ready to exercise faith in Jesus?!

The following is needed: ***Publish the by-laws of the WCG and make necessary changes to institute legal accountability. Explain your qualifications to be the "general of pastors." Disfellowshipment should undergo major review and policies should be instituted to include consensus on such matters to avoid the abuses of the past year.***

**3. Closed Communication: Open and Honest Discussion Still Thwarted by Structure.**

"Communication in a toxic faith system isn't a two-way interaction. Information is valid only if it comes from the top of the organization and is passed down to the bottom.... In many toxic organizations someone is there to close off the communication for the leader. The job is to placate those who disagree and satisfy those who want a direct voice into the leader. The person running interference knows that his or her job is to never tell the leader anything other than what is desired to be heard" (*Toxic Faith*, pp. 181-182).

I wrote you the following in November 1995 regarding the new policy of mandated employee tithing:

"Please do not make this seeming step toward a return to the authority and control that has characterized our past. I know it will take a little longer to get results by encouraging members and employees to give rather than requiring them. But, I believe, as you wrote, that as we look to Christ in faith that he will provide and guide. At the very least, I plead with you not to print the portion on employees being required to tithe in the *Worldwide News*. . . . If you print this material regarding Christian stewardship being "far more demanding" and that a mem-

ber's tithing record will be checked if the church considers hiring them, then I strongly believe we turn and make a step back down the road toward legalism. A membership that has in large part been religiously addicted will respond with guilt and legalistic performance to these statements. The joy they have received in giving the last few months will begin to ebb away."

You did not respond. Mike Feazell wrote me a note simply stating, "We will talk about it in Tulsa." Of course, that was several weeks later after it had already been printed in the *Worldwide News*. This example is by no means an isolated exception; it is characteristic of your closed communication style.

One minister recently shared with me a memo he had sent anonymously via his regional pastor in August 1994. He wrote, "Are we willing to empower our local churches by allocating substantial budgets to administrate locally and accomplish the goals of evangelizing, building facilities and hiring and building a team of skilled professionals?" These issues are not being addressed in an open forum. Communication is still far too closed. Dissent is not tolerated, but is labeled as division and used to disfellowship those who disagree. Ken Blue writes, "Healthy groups thrive on the free flow of communication.... The inability to tolerate freedom of expression, honest questions and straight talk is a hallmark of an abusive system" (*Healing Spiritual Abuse*, pp. 74-75).

The following is needed: *Current regional Q & A sessions are highly controlled. Provide forums for open discussion without recrimination. Encourage written forums for ideas not controlled by headquarter's editorial power. (The Good News Grapevine is a step in the right direction, but Ron Lohr has stated he checks with WCG administration on the admissibility of some items.)*

**4. Manipulative Tithing: Current Heavy Emphasis Seems Characteristic of Past Exploitation.**

"Toxic Rule #9. Avarice. Nothing is more important than giving money to the organization. Giving is an important part of anyone's faith.... [But] toxic faith organizations do not keep giving in perspective; they do not view it as an act of worship. It is a means of funding for them. *Religious addicts believe that nothing is more essential than the organization's continuation,* [italics mine] which is funded by the gifts of the fol-

lowers.... When ministries meet our needs, we must support them. But we must do that out of love and worship of God, not the manipulation of people" (*Toxic Faith*, pp. 256-258).

I sent you the preceding quote in November 1995. However, in March of this year there appeared numerous messages in church literature on the importance of tithing to the organization, with 10% *plus* emphasized. There were requests in your circulated video tapes, and the ministry were encouraged of their *responsibility* to preach about tithing "on a regular basis." This seems to contradict your strong stance on old covenant stipulations being obsolete unless reiterated in the New Testament. More striking, it seems very suspect when numerous cuts are being made in services to local congregations and ministerial benefits at the same time *you receive a raise in pay that is not widely publicized.*

"We have also seen diminished giving on the part of those who remain with us. Please understand I am not scolding you if you have seen the need to redirect some of your finances. The fact that the old covenant three-tithe system is not the same as the new covenant system does not mean there is no new covenant responsibility. Quite the contrary" (Joseph Tkach, Feb. 26, 1996 Co-worker Letter).

"God's old covenant people had to give at least 10 percent ... plus give offerings on other occasions. In contrast, the new covenant *does not* [italics mine] specify a certain percentage. However, the underlying principle is still valid.... Here are three reasons: 1) God blesses those who give. 2) God commands his people to give. 3) The church needs money.... The new covenant makes *astonishing demands* [italics mine] on us.... I do not want to belabor the point, but I want to make it clear. The church does have financial needs. Members do have financial responsibilities toward the church. And God does bless the cheerful giver" (*Worldwide News*, "The High Cost of Following Christ," Joseph Tkach, March 12, 1996).

"We are now reaching a point where more decline in income will result in [harmful] cuts.... *It is no secret that neglect of financial support of the church is often symptomatic of a general neglect of living in Christ* [italics mine].... Using the biblical principle, a tithe really ought to be considered a general minimum standard, with each

person deciding before Christ in his or her own heart whether they can give more, or have to give less" (ibid, Mike Feazell, Mar. 12, 1996).

"What are a Christian's responsibilities in helping spread the gospel?... Our contributions are not by themselves an infallible index to what we treasure in this life, but giving is not a minor matter unrelated to our spiritual lives either" (ibid, Neil Earle, March 12, 1996).

These preceding quotes all appeared about the same time your raise was mentioned by Bernie Schnippert to the ministers in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He said, "Until about 2 months ago, Joe wasn't the highest paid person in the church.... [We] set his [new and higher] salary in his absence...." ("Q & A session," Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, March 10, 1996; Pastor Gilbert's notes circulated on e-mail.)

This approach also seems inconsistent with other statements you have made: "If [God] commands something only for Israelites, then we have absolutely no authority to command it.... To teach a command with divine authority, it makes a great deal of difference whether the NT commands it, or whether the only commands for it are found in a covenant ... declared obsolete" (*WWN*, Feb. 1996).

The following is needed: *A much fuller and more detailed financial disclosure should be made available, and, given WCG's egregious past abuses in this area, you should avoid appeals for money and rely upon free-will offerings and pledges.*

**5. Financial Control: Congregations Still Send 100% of Their Donations to Headquarters.**

Ruth Tucker outlines the heavy financial demands of the pre-1995 WCG with its three tithes, seven offerings and additional pleas for money (*Another Gospel*, pp. 201-202.) However, some believe the WCG now approximates normality in this area. Not true! The congregations still send 100% of their money to you. They are still told 10% tithing is a minimum. They are still supposed to give additional offerings on seven festivals each year. They are still highly encouraged to save for travel and accommodations at an eight day festival of tabernacles each year. And, the congregations are still expected to do fundraising for local activities. But, even then, many of the expenses of running a local church are taken from this fund which is raised through the hard work of the membership.

Current regional pastor Craig Bacheller told Mike Feazell and me at dinner, in January 1995, he had determined his congregation received 19 cents back in services for every \$1 sent to Pasadena. Where does the rest go? While there are annual budget reports in the *Worldwide News*, they do not reveal very much. Most are really unaware of how the vast amount of money that does not return to local areas is actually spent. To my knowledge, it has only been recently disclosed that up-keep for the Pasadena property is 8 million dollars annually (*Worldwide News*, March 12, 1994, p. 1). This fact was not disclosed until the decision to sell the property was announced. In the previous five years that there was no university on the grounds and only a small number of employees, this fact was virtually unknown.

The explanation is given that our church has already tried collecting money locally, but some ministers stole a portion of it. So, your administration will continue to collect it centrally and you will decide if, and when, you will return 75% to us (Bernie Schnippert, Harrisburg, March 10, 1996), or 65% (Joseph Tkach Video, May 4, 1996), or some other yet to be decided lower percentage. The problem is that the members do not compare their situation to the thousands of other Christian churches where 100% is collected locally and a small percentage is then sent by the congregation to a governing body.

"Toxic rule #1: Control. The leader must be in control at all times. . . . In the entire system people fight for control while contributing complete control to the leader. . . . Until the leader relinquishes control, the ministry continues to teach through example the philosophy, "I must take things into my own hands" (*Toxic Faith*, pp. 243-245).

The following is needed: *Each congregation should locally incorporate, collect their funds and develop recognized by-laws and local governance. Those fellowships who decide the benefits of affiliating with WCG are mutually beneficial should work with you on an appropriate percentage (5-15% is customary; definitely not your taking 100% and then deciding how much to return).*

**6. Local Congregations Not a True Priority: E.g. \$250 Million Campus Sale Proceeds.**

You wrote in the March 12, 1996 *Worldwide News*, "Friends, we are a church, and we sincerely want headquarter

to serve the spiritual needs of our members rather than thinking that the members exist to serve us." Yes, it sounds good. But, the congregations still receive few services (and fewer all the time). They still rent halls. In fact, you have cut off funds for Wednesday night bible studies. Some pastors are stretched between two (and many with three, four and even five) churches. The idea is already being bantered about that our ministry will go to a part-time basis ("Q & A session," Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, March 10, 1996; Pastor Gilbert's notes circulated on e-mail). Our congregations are not even allotted funds for the most basic necessities for a church community presence, such as yellow pages listing, a business telephone line or a post office box. Financially, your statement that you exist to serve the membership seems ludicrous! Quite the contrary.

It seems to me that the true priority continues to be a corporate presence. You continue to spend about \$6 million annually to subsidize Ambassador University and \$8 million to keep the campus in salable condition. The ratio of headquarters personnel to full-time ministry is still appalling: more than 300 employees and fewer than 250 full-time ministers in the United States. I was flabbergasted when Greg Albrecht mentioned to me in Portland (March 23, 1996) that his budget for the *Plain Truth* had just been cut from \$16 million to \$4 million. I had assumed it had been cut much lower several years ago. Many of our members were amazed to discover the concert series was costing \$2 million per year. It seems you only disclose how much something costs as a justification in the event you choose to cut it.

Many of our members believe when the campus is sold you will begin to reverse this trend and services will begin to come to local areas first. *I do not believe this will be the case.* I implored Mike Feazell in Atlanta (January 7, 1996) to consider moving the headquarters to Nashville, Tennessee, or any other site East of the Mississippi. I explained how nearly 80% of our members and churches live on this side of the country. I told him how this would send a visible message to the membership that the corporate body was available and poised to serve. He was firm he was going to stay in California. In fact, 2/3 of the sites mentioned in the *Worldwide News* for possible relocation are near the West coast.

Additionally, it does not appear congregations will benefit from the \$250 million you expect to receive from the

sale of the campus. I have heard your Q & A session several times and recall your response about how it will be spent as including the following: 1) an endowment for the corporate headquarters, 2) a ministerial retirement program, and 3) an endowment for Ambassador University. On one occasion you mentioned lastly that some might be used to help congregations toward a building fund. But, given your administration's record, I doubt there will be adequate disclosure of how it is actually spent.

I believe the very first priority should be the congregations, not a last, if there is anything left over, priority. At the very least, I believe a decision of this magnitude should have meaningful input from the membership and ministry. Rather, it seems to me you are already discovering new ways to spend the money. Recently, there has been much focus on a daily radio program you would do starting in November (Harrisburg, Penn., March 9, 1996; Minister Gilbert's notes circulated on e-mail).

The membership got very excited when the *Worldwide News* had cover stories on the building program and how all the congregations would be receiving one. There were even pictures of what they would look like. But, once again, it was not to be, and in hind sight, seems characteristic of past propaganda. At one of this year's ministerial conferences the question was brought up regarding buildings. I recall you replied the WCG was always getting into things when other churches were getting out. You said, "Other churches now know buildings are a bad idea, and it's only now that we [WCG] want buildings." To me, this seemed like another dishonest political maneuver to substantiate our current system.

The following is needed: *The vast proceeds from the sale of the campus should go to local congregations that have been short-changed for 30 years, not only spiritually and doctrinally, but in terms of service. Prove to the members you exist to serve them, or get out of the way!*

**7. Chaos and Confusion: Jesus Lost Among Ever-Changing Policies, Programs and Crisis.**

"Another tactic to keep people out of touch with the present is to foment confusion, punctuated by crisis." Policies may be handed down and programs launched that seem to fit no coherent pattern.... The resulting tur-

moil keeps people from finding out what is really going on. This serves to cover up the fact that almost no productive activity may be occurring and that the little that does happen requires an inordinate amount of effort. Because no one (except those at the top) knows what is [really] happening, gossip is rampant. Crisis is sometimes used to further muddy the water.... This keeps followers looking outward so that they will have no energy or will to examine their own painful emotions and broken relationships" (*Healing Spiritual Abuse*, p. 114).

I pleaded for spiritual rest for our ministry to my regional pastor, John Comino (November 28, 1995):

"The pile can only be stacked so high for us to truly minister to our congregations.... I don't know how many pastors I have heard say the last couple of years they don't have time to visit the brethren any more because of all the paper work, new programs, new policies, etc. We really need rest.... Christianity is about peace. Otherwise we continue to model the performance treadmill of the past. And, it creates confusion.... I know the ministry is expected to work hard to make it through this transition, but the kind of rest I am talking about is not physical."

For example, I travelled to a planning/idea conference in Big Sandy, Texas (Nov. 21- 22, 1995), for the newly instituted Family Ministry department only to find out upon arrival that the program had been canceled. Ron Kelly was promptly given yet another new job, ministerial development, where he started a program for tuition reimbursement. This new program seemed to last little more than a month; it joined a WCG grave yard littered with such short-lived policies. The roller coaster goes up and down, and people's lives are thrown from side to side. It has been my experience with the historic culture of the WCG that the message of salvation through Jesus gets lost in an overflow of programs, policies and crisis. I feel strongly this structural dynamic in the WCG remains unchanged. It is systemic.

The following is needed: *Stop the distractions and rest in Jesus!*

### **8. Lack of Respect for Members and Ministry: Current Administrative Approach Condescending.**

"[One] reason for secrecy in a church is that the leadership has a condescending, negative view of the laity.

This results in conspiracies on the leadership level. They tell themselves, 'People are not mature enough to handle the truth.' This is patronizing, at best" (*Subtle Power*, p. 78).

At the conference in Palm Springs (December 17, 1995), you responded to a pastor's question in the Q & A with the following: "I don't want to make this person look stupid, but ..." and then proceeded to belittle their question, exegetical abilities and theology. The person told me he was devastated and felt humiliated. After dinner in Portland, Oregon (March 23, 1996), you, Mike Feazell, Greg Albrecht, Don Mears and I were out in the hall talking. You mimicked two current, long-time, much-respected church leaders making fun of their mannerisms and the way they responded in doctrinal meetings.

These incidents are not isolated. I have talked to many ministers who don't feel loved or respected by your administration. There's a feeling of being patronized and condescended to. They are glad you say you love Jesus, but want to know you love them. One commented to me, "Perhaps you will find a door to minister to our hurting/angry administrators as well." Mike Feazell asked me to give a workshop on helping our pastors sensitively minister healing to our members, but twice I have offered to facilitate this workshop for you and senior administrators (Jan. 9 & Mar. 14, 1996), and you have not responded.

I agree with your doctrinal changes, but absolutely disagree with the method by which you have imposed them upon the fellowship, instituting one change at a time. I believe this has bred suspicion and facilitated further denial in our membership. Many feel it has been abusive and tormenting! One person described feeling like they had been spiritually raped in the past year. A WCG pastor compared your approach to bobbing a dog's tail, one painful inch at a time. Cruel! Jesus respects us and our ability to make choices and does not violate our autonomy as you have repeatedly done.

There has been a similar disrespectful approach to those who have left. "If the whistle-blowers reveal the group's problems to the outside world, the group will mobilize to discredit them. Sometimes trumped-up countercharges are aired, but most often the troublemakers' mental and emotional state is brought into question" (*Healing Spiritual Abuse*, p. 75). One member wrote to me: "So the smear campaign has begun in earnest.... When the

war they have now begun is complete, my reputation will be mud." I have recently seen this dynamic myself. One African American pastor who left our fellowship over some of the same issues I am delineating also received this kind of treatment. I was sitting at your dining room table in your house on July 24, 1995, with Craig Bacheller, Don Mears and yourself. A leading church administration supervisor who was present said this minister, who had left our fellowship, just "wanted to be white," was in it for the money, and possessed mental problems.

The following is needed: *Openness and honesty on the part of the administration with a much higher level of expression of love and respect for the members and ministry.*

### **9. WCG Organization Most Important, More than Jesus or People: Corporation 1st, Church 2nd**

*I believe this is a point and a half.* It would appear, given the eight preceding points, that following Jesus' will by faith and serving the membership for his sake are important only when they do not impact the organization's continuity and prestige. I know you say that you have lost members and income by the changes you have made. *However, your power and prestige have not been abated.* In fact, you have now had opportunity to speak before hundreds of denominational leaders, be interviewed on radio with James Kennedy and Hank Hanegraaff, obtain several book contracts, and that in addition to your planned radio program (and aforementioned pay increase). You did not possess any where near this kind of prominence before. And, frankly, you achieved it by force! The Spirit does not work in this way.

In short, I have been asking your administration for 21 months to act in faith and allow Jesus to have control instead of working it out yourselves via abusive dynamics. Greg Albrecht, in a conversation with Norman Shoaf and myself (February 17, 1995), rationalized saying that you had to consider the livelihood of hundreds of employees. I responded that, in the past, your administration was in no way reluctant to tell members to have faith and pay their three tithes and seven offerings. He replied that maybe I was just further down the "grace road" than he was. What I do know by overwhelming evidence is that the WCG places its own continuance above Jesus' will or the members' welfare.

The following is needed: **Organizational surrendering of the will, not cosmetic doctrinal change.**

Life has enough of its own trials without one's church being a source of abuse as well! Yet, you say it's going to take five or ten years to reach the place we want to be. One member in my congregation suggested this is somewhat akin to the plight of the African American during the civil rights period. He said, "The black man learned that when the Northerner said 'not yet' and the Southerner said, 'no,' they both meant exactly the same thing." The truth of the gospel, we are all one in Jesus, ought not be delayed. When it is, it is denied! As one minister wrote, "the ground is level at the base of the cross." My second series of sermons has been distributed to over 150 ministers. Sermon #18, "Because I'm the Pastor," addresses this issue. This material is espoused but not put into action!

There are many healthy Christian churches where our members could find the healing they need, with pastors who would love to serve them. "What could have been a place to find shelter from the storms of life becomes a place where the religious addict 'sets up camp' to stay out of life. . . . Sacrifice for the church completed in the name of God sacrifices the family" (*Toxic Faith*, p. 137). Yet, you encourage us to strive on, our members and pastors driving long distances, our ministers physically and emotionally exhausting themselves, serving two, three, or four congregations, and to what end? "This level of service often becomes overwhelming. People become so drained they can't think clearly. Their emotions become distorted. Deep depression, extreme anxiety, and a general numbness are common in overwhelmed religious addicts" (ibid, pp. 177-178).

I realize those who read this letter will not agree with everything I write. *However, I want them to know it is all right to dissent, to ask questions and expect change.* And, I want them to know it's O.K. to disaffiliate from, or leave, an organization that continues to exhibit so many toxic tendencies and either become, or find, a healthy church where they can worship and find healing. We have been bought with a price. We ought to live accordingly. Galatians 5:1 states, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Do not therefore be enslaved again with a yoke of bondage."

**I hope and pray** many members will find freedom, love, joy and peace in

healthy Christian churches outside this organization. I pray that those who stay will expect the aforementioned to be addressed in their local fellowships. I pray they will not give up their health and/or families, burning themselves out, for your personal prestige and prominence. The members are worth more! And, Jesus is worthy of it.

**I hope and pray** many WCG ministers will stand up for their congregations, that they will realize they answer to Jesus first, and he loves and respects them. For Cathy, Melissa, Linda and the thousands like them, it's time to stop bailing, time to stop paddling; **it is time to stand and rock the boat!** The members are the most important thing to Jesus; they must be to us, too! To my fellow ministers whom I love and appreciate, I say, this is our church, too. I pray they will take a stand for Jesus' sake!

**I hope and pray** the greater Christian community and cult-watching groups will look closer, underneath the wool of the WCG, at the facts. They reveal a danger to the flock! The current *Plain Truth* has my cover article, "Healing Ministry of Jesus." I believe it is an apt metaphor for the 1996 WCG. The cover illustration of Jesus healing a young woman is remarkable, the professionalism excellent, but it is a spiritual facade. The article omits the final two words so the conclusion is left an incomplete sentence. A special insert points out the error. It looks great on *first examination*, but *look closer*, and you will see they left out two words. In fact, they left out "Jesus Christ," and I believe that is exactly what you are presently doing, leaving out Jesus Christ by your approach!

You continue to engineer us videos and materials to design a Christian church out of a destructive system. We pastors follow the instructions carefully and paint by numbers the fireplace on the wall, according to your specifications. Then, our members all gather around this facade and rub their hands waiting to get warm. We wait but grow weary. Many ministers are on the verge of emotional breakdown, and you are financially cutting them off! Our structure shuts out and stifles Jesus. It must change! I beseech members not to wait on you, but follow the Spirit. He is the One waiting!

Standing up for Jesus,

David Covington

P.O. Box 70012

Nashville, Tennessee 37207

(615) 672-0178;

INTERNET:coving1d@aol.com

### "God is Light" from page 2

tion, can't we? If your life does not produce the fruit of a Christian while all around you see fruit in the lives of others, this ought to say something to you. It ought to prove the fault is not with the power, but with the outlet, and you are the outlet.

Where does our fellowship lie? What gets our loyalty? Where are our hearts? "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another." Try to understand this important point, don't ever forget it! Fellowship is joint participation in something held in common.

Look for, search for the light of God. Light does not cleanse. Light simply exposes. If all God did was clarify the blackness of our sin and focus our imperfections, we've gained nothing but greater frustration. If all God did was point out the error of our ways, then He's offered us no help at all. God's terms require a cleansing agent. The cleansing agent is not the light, it is the blood of Christ—the Lamb, which cleanseth us from all sin.

To get this cleansing we must walk in the light. We've seen the darkness—the very blackness of our lives. We must confess our sins—this is not a man made scheme, these are God's terms. Humility is a part of this confession, as is repentance. You'll not confess in sincerity until you're humble, brokenhearted in repentance, stripped of your pride and self-assurance. As long as we say "I'll do it my way," you can forget it. It has to be His way or not at all.

God stands with His commitment to Christ and Calvary as man's substitute.

We can trust Him.

God's terms are, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." That's it—that's the gospel. This is the story to share with others. This is what we live out in our lives, not content with darkness, but day by day trying to reveal more and more of the light of God in Jesus Christ. We do this on His terms, on the basis of what He thought and has done for us.

That brings us to the moment of decision and commitment. This is where opportunity lies, for commitment is not up to God, it's up to us. He makes the offer, but we must accept it. He won't cleanse us unless we desire cleansing. He won't give us His light unless we long for light. When we meet His terms, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness! 

**“Grace” from page 1**

ed and placed our faith in Jesus' sacrifice. By contrast, salvation, meaning having our lives lasting forever because we have bodies made of spirit, has not occurred yet since we have not entered the kingdom of God yet. So Gal. 2:16, which talks about justification, need not conflict with Hebrews 5:9, which talks about salvation.

Of course in some cases the word “saved” does mean the same as “justified.” One meaning for the word “saved” is that the death penalty of our sins has been removed by Jesus' sacrifice, which is the same thing as justification. But another meaning is being given eternal life through an immortal spirit body when Jesus comes back, since then we could never die. The word “saved” is applied to Christians in three different tenses in the Bible. In Acts 15:11, it is used in the past tense: “But we believe that we are saved through the grace of Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.” Salvation is a process in I Cor. 1:18 since it is in the present, progressive tense: “For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” Finally, in a familiar text, it is used in the future tense: “But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved” (Matt 24:13). Obviously, the Bible uses the word “saved” in several different ways about Christians, or else the Bible would contradict itself!

**Justification, Sanctification & Glorification**

A useful method (employed by the Seventh-day Adventists) for analyzing salvation's three different definitions uses the terms “justification,” “sanctification,” and “glorification.” “Justification” has the basic definition that Christians are given a right standing before God through having all their sins forgiven through faith in Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. “Sanctification” is the process by which Christians actually become righteous through developing holy righteous character through the Holy Spirit living in them. “Glorification” occurs when we enter the kingdom of God and are given a spirit body at the first resurrection when Jesus returns (Phil 3:20-21; 1Cor 15:49). Here justification is gained by faith through grace alone, but sanctification involves Christians actually obeying God

literally in order for them to be made actually holy. Justification is gained by men and women accepting Jesus' sacrifice by faith, baptism, and repentance (Acts 2:38). “Works” have nothing to do with it here. In contrast, for humans to actually become holy, they must gain the Holy Spirit and then follow its lead in obeying God. Sanctification involves human effort and participation in a way that neither justification nor glorification involve, for the latter two are fundamentally just “done” to humans by God, while the former requires the effort of continually yielding our will to God's will.

Now consider the problems supposedly created by contrasting Gal. 2:16 with Rom. 2:13: “[F]or not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.” Then, as always, Martin Luther's “book of straw” poses its own wrinkle on the subject of justification: “You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone” (Jms 2:24). This contrast seems to be a blatant contradiction, but is not when the context of James' statement is more carefully scrutinized. First, if we have not works, we did not really have any faith to begin with. “[F]aith without works is dead” (Jms 2:26). Thus, if we do not obey God, we are not justified because we would have shown we never truly repented (which always must involve the determination to obey God in the future). For if we truly repent, we will begin to obey God because we have an overall obedient attitude (Acts 26:20), even if we may continue to sin now and then. Thus, when James says (v. 21), “was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar,” he means that Abraham showed he had an overall obedient attitude (the proof of true repentance) by doing a literal work of righteousness. Through this repentant attitude, Abraham fulfilled one of the conditions for being justified (Acts 5:31; Luke 24:47; compare 2Cor 7:10; Acts 13:24). So now we know justification comes only from faith ultimately.

Also, in resolving the seeming contradiction between James and Paul concerning justification, we need to realize “justification” and “sanctification” have secondary meanings to those found in the three-definition explanation of salvation described above. Since we humans keep sinning all the time, including after we

have confessed our sins to God and accepted Jesus as our personal Savior at some definite point in the past, we continually need to keep getting justified as we keep sinning. But, contrary to what those who accept “once saved, always saved” maintain, justification should not be seen as a one-time event that forgives in advance all the sins we will commit in the future. This view can turn God's grace into a license for sin, since no matter how much we may sin, it is automatically already forgiven at the moment we initially accepted Jesus as our personal Savior. As for sanctification, in one sense we are “sanctified” (made holy) all at once, which is when we receive the Spirit of God after baptism and the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-19; 19:6). But becoming obedient in the habits of daily living is a gradual, life-long process, so sanctification should be mainly seen as a process rather than something instantaneous (Rom 6:13, 16, 19, 22; 1Jn 3:7). Hence, one solution to the seeming contradiction between Paul and James on justification is to see the former as normally talking about the initial moment of conversion, while the latter discusses how it needs to be maintained by a continuously repentant and faithful relationship with God.

**Two Kinds of Righteousness**

Now—what is the relationship between righteousness and faith? Since justification literally means “to be declared righteous,” it is obvious that righteousness must also be gained by faith, just as justification (the removing of sin) is. The Bible shows that two types of righteousness come from God, since that word is used two different ways. The first type is **imputed righteousness**, meaning it is attributed to us by God due to our faith only (Rom 10:10). We find this type in Romans 4:6: “[J]ust as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works.” The second type, **imparted righteousness**, is gradually gained as spiritual character is developed through using the Holy Spirit to overcome through various trials (Phil 3:12-13). This type is described in Romans 6:16: “Do you not know...you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” This second type is actual righteousness, composed of acquired habits of obedi-

ence, and is not something God just arbitrarily asserts we have. Imputed righteousness corresponds with justification's normal definition, while imparted righteousness corresponds with sanctification.

A Christian receives **imputed** righteousness when he places his faith in Jesus' sacrifice. As Paul put it in Romans 4:5: "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned [regarded] as righteousness." Or, as the Old Testament put it (Gen 15:6): "Then he [Abraham] believed in the Eternal, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." When imputed righteousness is given to a Christian, he has still has to overcome all his old evil habits from his life prior to repentance. Likewise, Abraham was declared righteous before he was circumcised: "How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; and he received the sign of circumcision [not the actual reality—it was only imputed spiritually], a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned [to be looked upon as having] to them" (Romans 4:10-11). Notice also Romans 4:22 (KJV): "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." Then Philippians 3:9 says: "[A]nd may be found in Him, not having a righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith [only—without works] may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law [i.e. from coming under the Old Covenant by being circumcised], but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith [without the physical act—"work"—of being circumcised]." Thus, there is one kind of righteousness which is attributed (imputed) to us purely on the basis of faith, without having overcome any evil habits we may have, or obeying various physical rituals (such as circumcision) found in the Old Testament.

**Imparted** righteousness, the "second" type, is gradually developed as a Christian progresses in his spiritual life as he overcomes sins with the Holy Spirit's help (Rom 8:13). For God does not just intend to only say (declare) that we are righteous by removing our sins from us (which constitutes imputed righteousness), but He wants us to actually become

righteous by overcoming sinful ways of life. Note Rom. 8:3-4: "He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." We are to become holy (sanctified): "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 11:44).

We must never think, as many professing Christians do, that we are not to work hard to actually become righteous, since they think being declared righteous is enough with an initial conversion experience which they might call "being born again." They want **imputed** righteousness without striving to actually become righteous by obeying the law, which is **imparted** righteousness. To the contrary, we must put effort into becoming sanctified (holy): "[D]o not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present your selves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness" (Rom 6:13). "[Y]ou are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness" (Rom 6:16). Then, what does righteousness result in? "[S]o now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification" (Rom 6:19). Then, what does sanctification result in? "But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life" (Rom 6:22). Observe how imparted righteousness is linked to sanctification, and in turn how sanctification is made a condition to salvation! Thus, at first we are declared righteous because Jesus took away our sins, but later we are actually to become righteous by overcoming sinful habits with God's help.

In order to become truly righteous, we need more than just our faith **in** Jesus, which only allows us to be declared righteous (justified). Instead, we need also to have to actual faith **of** Jesus, not just **in** Jesus, since we must have God's help in order to become truly obedient in all the habits of our life. "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith'" (Rom 1:17). To have the death penalty removed from us by being justified does not make our old sinful habits go away automatically. We must have God's help to overcome our carnal ways of life, through the faith **of**

Christ. Since Jesus needed God's help in order to resist sin (Heb 5:7), then surely we do also (Rom 8:13). We are to learn how to live a righteous life by Jesus' own faith coming into us, becoming a part of us: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith **of** the Son of God" (Gal 2:20, KJV). We could never become actually righteous by our own efforts alone: "And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment" (Isa 64:6).

### No Law; No Sin; No Righteousness

One stumbling block to various professing Christians attempting to become actually righteous is the common belief that the law is done away such that there is no need to obey God. But this confuses the law as a guide to conduct with the law as a source of salvation. Christians should look to the law as if it is a mirror helping reveal what is wrong in their lives (Jms 1:23-25): "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does." The law defines what is righteousness since sin occurs when it is disobeyed. "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1Jn 3:4, KJV). "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom 5:13). "Shall we say, then, that the Law itself is sinful? Of course not! But it was the Law that made me know what sin is. If the Law had not said, 'Do not desire what belongs to someone else,' I would not have known such a desire [was sin]" (Rom 7:7). "Through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). The law convicts us since, when we disobey it, it condemns us (Rom 4:15): "[F]or the Law brings about wrath." "[F]or sin, taking opportunity through the commandment deceived me, and through it killed me" (Rom 7:11). Obviously, that which is the source of condemnation cannot be a source of salvation! Yet, the law is still a Christian's compass as to what God wants us to do in our lives.

Furthermore, the law is clearly still in force: "Do we nullify the law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary,

we establish the law” (Rom 3:31). “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For he who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not commit murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law” (Jms 2:10-11). Obviously, you cannot transgress what has been abolished! “For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man...” (Rom 7:22). How could Paul “joyfully concur” with something that has been abolished? He certainly did not in Galatians! In Ephesians 6:1-3, he says the Fifth Commandment is still in force. Of course, some aspects of the law have been abolished (Eph 2:15; Heb 9:10; 10:8-9). But the moral law, which is codified by the Ten Commandments, must still be in force, or else the Bible contradicts itself. Thus, the dual law theory is true.

The law does not contradict grace so long as we realize specifically how each has a different role. The law is the great sin detector—it tells us what to do and not do. Grace describes the attitude God has towards mankind’s sins: He forgives us through unmerited pardon. Obedience does not earn salvation, since only by grace, not by the merit of lawkeeping, is a person ultimately saved. Without Jesus’ death on behalf of our sins, nobody could be saved. But if one routinely sins without repentance or an overall obedient attitude, one will lose salvation. Lawkeeping earns nothing concerning salvation, but lawbreaking without repentance costs salvation since “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23) before and after baptism. However, so long as one has an overall obedient attitude and continues to overcome (Rev 21:7), one will still be saved. So long as a Christian has the Holy Spirit, which is the presence of salvation conditionally, he or she will still be saved (2Cor 5:5; Eph 4:30; 1:13-14).

### **Salvation and Rewards Not the Same**

But how do we explain about being saved by grace when we encounter such scriptures as Matthew 16:27 (KJV): “For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.” Or Revelation 20:12: “[T]he dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to

their deeds”?

What we need to realize here is that our “reward” is not salvation, but rather the position we will have in the kingdom of God. The parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27), which has servants receiving positions of rule over ten (v. 17) and five (v. 19) cities, plainly shows different ranks will exist in the kingdom of God. The servants were rewarded due to their differing efforts, differing positions, relative to their ability (Matt 25:14). Obviously, getting into the kingdom of God is not based on ability or what is earned, but on whether you repent, have faith in Jesus’ sacrifice, and accept God’s grace. [True, such faith must manifest works to be real (Jms 2:26).] A reward is something given in exchange for some service, good work, achievement, or accomplishment, such as being put on the honor roll at school in exchange for having good grades. Grace is something given completely freely, in exchange for nothing, and is totally undeserved. Thus grace is the opposite of a reward. And since eternal life is a gift (Rom 6:23), it can **never** be a reward in exchange for services (works) rendered.

Since getting into the kingdom of God is by grace, the amount of time you are a Christian in the process of sanctification has nothing to do with whether you are saved (Matt 20:1-16). Instead, the issue is, Have you repented, Did you have faith in God’s grace, and Did you receive the Holy Spirit, which is what makes you a Christian (Rom 8:9)? For if you die the day after having gained the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, you are every bit as much saved as if you were a Christian for fifty years and then died. For instance, those who repent and believe during the Great Tribulation will be saved despite having only believed for a brief period before being martyred in it. But the person who is a Christian for fifty years has a much longer period to bear fruit toward his or her reward (1Cor 3:11-15). Thus, besides the benefits of being happier in this life due to obeying God’s law throughout life, there also can be a great spiritual benefit (rank in the kingdom of God), even though everyone receives by grace the same basic benefit and gift: eternal life (Matt 20:12-16).

Are Christians qualifying for the kingdom of God now? The answer is yes or no, depending on the definition of the

word “qualify” used. If “qualify” is taken to mean “to be fitted or competent for something,” the answer is no, because Christians on their own will never be fit enough or competent enough for God’s kingdom. On the other hand, if the word “qualify” is taken to mean “to get authority, license, power etc. (i.e. something) as by fulfilling required conditions,” then the answer is yes. If Christians fulfill the required conditions of repentance and faith, they will enter the kingdom of God due to God’s grace. Thus Christians either are or aren’t qualifying for the kingdom of God, depending on how the word “qualify” is used.

### **Reconciling Grace and Works**

A key point in reconciling grace and works is that an obedient attitude is a condition to salvation. Grace is undeserved and unmerited, but it is not unconditional. As someone once pointed out, “We have to be eligible for grace.” God lays down certain requirements for anyone who wishes to receive salvation: Repentance and faith in Jesus’ sacrifice, which must be expressed by baptism (Acts 2:38, John 3:5; Mark 16:16). Repentance literally means “a change of mind” or “having another mind.” And since repentance involves not only the confessions of sins to God, but also the will to try to obey God in the future, you must have an overall obedient attitude if you wish to be saved. Naturally, if you have this obedient, repentant attitude, you will produce good works matching it. For a faith that produces no works cannot save: “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder” (Jms 2:19).

Those who truly repent, are baptized, and then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit will strive to obey God. The Holy Spirit is not passive within you, but it will flow out in righteous works if you allow it to. The branches (Christians) will produce fruit (righteous works) if you allow the Holy Spirit to work within you (John 15:1-8). Thus, if one is repentant, one had better be trying to obey God, or else one’s “repentance” or “faith” were delusions. Occasional slip-ups can be expected, and are routinely forgiven (“justified”), but they should decrease as one grows spiritually (2Pet 3:18). Those who strive to gain more of the same faith Jesus had, the faith OF Christ, will establish the law (Rom 3:31) in their lives, and avoid sin-

ning as much as possible. Of course, our sins can always be forgiven even after baptism (1Jn 1:8), but may we minimize them! Repentance without works is just as dead as faith is without works.

Notice that the fact God has conditions to his grace does not mean we earn salvation by fulfilling those conditions. Rather, through repentance and faith, we are doing only what was required of us already (Luke 17:10). No amount of lawkeeping today can take away a single sin committed yesterday. Only through Jesus' sacrifice, and not through commandment keeping, can any sin be forgiven. And surely no one has "earned" the right to have Jesus' innocent life slain for himself or herself!

Consider: **If** God had no conditions to salvation, then why does He not "save" the whole world right now? He loves us

all, does he not? Also, **if** there are no conditions, then anybody could demand the benefits of God's grace, which is eternal life. It would become a right. Even a life-long criminal who never repented or believed in Jesus' sacrifice could whine to God, "I want eternal life and forgiveness now!" And God would have to give it to him if He imposed no conditions. On the contrary, notice Galatians 5:21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. We must have an obedient, repentant attitude if we wish to be saved. Only by laying down conditions can God keep His impartial grace from being abused.

In a very important sense, we can always be confident of our salvation so long as we have a repentant attitude and we are overcoming, which will be a manifestation of our faith. Literal obedience will then be a natural outflow of our

faith and obedient attitude. If we sin, now and then, we can always be forgiven so long as we repent and strive to keep that overall obedient attitude and grow in grace and knowledge. Occasionally, of course, we have bad attitudes, especially when under stress, but so long as we repent of these mental slips there is no danger to our salvation since our overall attitude would still be correct, and we still would have the Holy Spirit, which is what guarantees eternal life so long as it is within us (Rom 8:11; 2Cor 5:5). Those who worry about having committed the unpardonable sin almost certainly have not committed it, if they still wish to repent. Let us never give up being a Christian because we sin occasionally, for with God's help and forgiveness we will triumph: "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom 8:31). 

## Ancient "MMT" Text Helps Us Understand What Paul Meant by the Phrase "Works of the Law" *by Eric V. Snow*

One of the great puzzles in Paul's writings is the meaning of the term "the works of the law." For example, Paul wrote: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Rom 3:28). The term appears again in Galatians 3:5: "Does He [God] then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" A longtime problem in interpreting this term is that it appeared absolutely nowhere in ancient Jewish literature outside the New Testament. If this term means all acts of lawkeeping and obeying God, whether it be caring for the poor, avoiding stealing, keeping the Sabbath, or getting circumcised, then the classical Protestant Reformation's view of how Christians are saved is fundamentally correct: works—literal acts of obedience—have nothing to do with being saved (except, perhaps, as being evidence of having saving faith). However, if this term has a narrow meaning, as referring to rituals of the ceremonial law, or various Old Testament judgments not tied to the Ten Commandments (i.e. the moral law), then this opens the door to the view that Paul merely condemned obeying the ceremonial law as a condition to salvation, with particular emphasis on circumcision. For various gentiles were seriously

tempted to be circumcised because standard Jewish theology said that one could not enter the Old Covenant relationship with God, and thus be saved, without being circumcised (compare Acts 15:1). For the Jews, circumcision was seen to be the equivalent of baptism for Christians—as absolutely necessary to gain an initial relationship with God, and thus necessary for salvation. So, when Paul wrote (say) Galatians 2:16 or Romans 3:28, did he mean no acts of obedience were a condition to salvation, or just no acts of obedience to the ceremonial law were a condition to salvation, such as circumcision?

As described in Martin Abegg's article, "Paul, 'Works of the Law,' and MMT," in the November/December 1995 Biblical Archeology Review, there has been uncovered **among the Dead Sea Scrolls** an ancient Jewish document using this term for the first time outside the Bible. **This document is known as the MMT (Hebrew for Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah, "Pertinent Works of the Law" by one translation).** It describes the works of the law in a list based upon ceremonial rituals, or various judgments, but **not upon the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath.** Examples of laws listed in it are: cleansing lepers, letting blind and deaf people into the Temple, carrying gentile corn into the inside of

the Temple, intermarrying with Ammonite and Moabite (i.e., gentile) converts, plowing with different animals simultaneously, mixing wool and linen in cloth together, and presenting gentile offerings. Since none of these "works of the law" concern the great precepts of the Ten Commandments, or such duties as caring for the poor, or even tithing, keeping the Sabbath, Holy Days, etc., the MMT's definition of "the works of the law" radically narrows the meaning of what Paul was condemning in Galatians 2-3 and Romans 3-4. It means literal works, obeying the moral law, can be a condition (not that they earn) to salvation, which is in accordance with certain always troubling scriptures like Matthew 19:17 or Romans 2:13: "[I]f you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." "[F]or not the hearers of the Law are just before God (contrast Gal 3:2, 5), but the doers of the Law will be justified." Hence, Paul can be seen as generally dealing with the initial stage of salvation—"justification"—and seen as denying repeatedly circumcision as being what reconciles you to God in this first stage of the salvation process. In contrast, "sanctification" can be seen as requiring some literal works of obedience to the moral law, as the chain link of logic in Romans 6:13, 16, 19, 22 would indicate. 

# The Church and Salvation

by Robert B. Schimmel

Many people have physically or mentally granted their church a position of preeminence over them. They have given away their reasoning and decision making to their

church. They appear to be very comfortable allowing church leaders to decree who, what, when and how they are to worship. Following the Bible has become secondary.

The Bible cautions about false religious teachers and wolves. It admonishes individuals to search the scriptures and prove all things for themselves (1Thes 5:21), to not follow evil (3Jn 11). Rarely do most ask: Is my church following God, or is it going away from God? While difficult, the preferred method is to try and prove something incorrect, rather than correct. The Bible says search the Scriptures, attempting to prove something is erroneous (Acts 17:11).

## The "C and E" Church Member

There is a joke about a person being a "C and E" church member.

This person shows up in services only on Christmas and Easter. It is to keep their name on the church membership role, just in case! They don't realize their name on a church roster does not save. Written in God's Book of Life, yes; on a church roster, no! There is one name given among men whereby we can be saved: Jesus Christ (Acts 4:8-12).

No church or religious leader has ever been given authority by God to change the Ten Commandments, or change the manner in which God says things are to be done. This statement is proved by a fascinating story found in 1 Kings 13:1-29. The clear message of the story comes in verse 21. Even a bonafide prophet of God has no authority to alter guidelines originally established by God. Since God does not change, no church leader or government has permission to repudiate God.

The church is called the 'body' of Christ (1Cor 12:12).

This is an analogy. The church is not Jesus Christ. The church is Christ's possession (Matt 16:18), a human structure made up of different men and women who meet as an assembly. A man can build a building, but the man is not the building. Same with Christ.

Can the church justify a person's actions? Only God justifies, through faith in Him (Gal 3:8).

Can the church die for anyone? Christ died for us before there was a church. We are reconciled to the Father by the death of Christ. Because of Jesus Christ, we receive the atonement (Rom 5:8-9).

Can the church sanctify its members? The church is an object, not the agent. We are components of the church. It is Christ's blood that sanctifies (Heb 13:12).

Can the church call anyone into the knowledge of the truth? No man can come to the knowledge of the coming kingdom of God unless it is caused by the Father. It is the Father who does the calling, who draws selected individuals

to Jesus (Jn 6:65). Many are called, but few take it seriously enough to follow (Mat 20:16). When a person decides to change his/her lifestyle, the church is to be there as a safety net, an assembly of like-minded believers to teach and help.

Can the church regenerate anyone? According to God's mercy, He

saves us by the washing (baptism) of regeneration (Tit 3:5).

Can the church raise any from the dead? The Father and glorified Son raise from the dead (Jn 5:21; 1Cor 6:14; Jn 6:40).

Can the righteousness of a church save? The church is composed of human beings. Errors will occur. But when there is so much error, a church can go into apostasy. Each person must make a decision as to how much error they will put up with. Here lies the danger. Which doctrines are correct? Which are not? Are doctrines followed without verification? Is the leadership of a church believed without question? Can these 'religious' men be error free? Only by God's grace we are saved (Eph 2:8-9), not that any church should boast!

Can we save each other? If Noah, Daniel and Job were our closest blood relatives, their righteousness could deliver only their own souls (Ezk 14:14).

## What is a Church?

Besides 'church', the original Greek word (#1577 in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the King James Bible) has several similar meanings: meeting (for or because of religious reason), calling out, congregation, assembly. 'Church' can be a gathering for good or bad, for true religion or false. Word #1577 is rendered 'assembly' in Acts 19. In verse 32 there is a 'confused assembly'. The assembly is a crowd, an unruly mob. In verses 39 and 40 there is question if the assembly was 'lawful'. It was in an 'uproar'.

The church has a role to play and duties to perform. Some of these are to bare witness (go into all the world), to be a support group caring for its members (1Cor 12:25-26). The church is a family. Sometimes a church becomes 'organized', with several assemblies answering to one central location. Unfortunately, the central authority often becomes a political machine in control of the facilities, and far too often has become corrupt (1Tim 4:1-2). The Galatians were corrupt (Gal 1:6-8).

Jesus said he would build His assembly upon a solid foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ would be the Chief Corner Stone. All would be fitted together as a habitation of God (Eph 2:20-22). Christ's body may not be a visually identified congregation, but individual members will be found working from a solid foundation.

The Book of 3 John is a letter to one man, Gaius. It is not written to a congregation. "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, prating against us with malicious words, not receiving the brethren, putting out of the church those who would ...". Gaius was probably put out of his local assembly for 'ministering' to the

(Continued on page 25)

# Local Congregations



## News from the Seattle Church of God, International

S\*C\*G\*I is a chartered church of CGI. While many CGI congregations have found it necessary to disassociate from the Tyler corporation after the recent problems, and while we may not approve of the way that Tyler handled the situation, we have not seen any such need to disassociate. We still maintain close ties with many who have chosen to leave the corporate organization.

Most refugees from WCG tend to look at church organizations through a bias which is based on their rather unfortunate experience with a dysfunctional organization. Even many in CGI tend to have a corporate, hierarchical mentality. But CGI is, by design, non-hierarchical in nature. Its congregations are “mostly” autonomous. I say “mostly” because there is one area where we are not autonomous; and that is the area of doctrine.

Although we do not claim absolute doctrinal purity, we do the best that we can with what God has revealed to us. Members are free to disagree and are not disfellowshipped for those disagreements. In fact we view such disagreement as healthy because we can always learn something from others even if we do not totally agree with them. The truth of God, however, is constant and we try not to stray from the clear word of God. Disagreements on doctrinal matters may be submitted to the ministerial council for review by any member of the church.

Except at the headquarters in Tyler, there are no paid ministers in CGI (now there’s an oxymoron for you). Ministers in CGI are not looked upon as a separate class of people except that church pastors have much more responsibility and accountability.

In many congregations church councils are elected annually to handle the business of the local church. This is in accordance with Acts 14:23 [And in every Church, after prayer and fasting, they

selected Elders by show of hands, and commended them to the Lord on whom their faith rested. (Weymouth NT)].

Although we teach tithing, the church does not tell its members where to give their tithes. Some send money to Tyler and others just tithe locally and some even give a portion of their tithe to support different ministries. Local funds are used locally. We believe that tithing is a personal matter between the individual and God.

Enough about the general nature of CGI. Here’s what’s happening in S\*C\*G\*I: S\*C\*G\*I is now sponsoring the Born to Win radio broadcast in Seattle (Saturdays at 6:00pm on KGNW AM820). We are examining many avenues of local evangelism. We would like to broadcast a portion of our local Sabbath service on Public Access TV. We are considering producing promotional videos and creating seminar presentations to “sell” the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are also considering the possibility of using live, call-in, talk-radio. We have put together audio Bible-study courses that are equivalent to college Bible classes from several years of Ron Dart tapes. As we develop tools for preaching the gospel and feeding the flock we hope to share those tools and our experience with other churches of God. We believe that the church can only grow by empowering the people of God with the tools that God gives us through His holy spirit.

We are a small group with fifteen to twenty-five meeting in Everett, WA every Sabbath; fifteen to thirty meeting in Kent, WA every Sabbath; and five to ten meeting in Olympia, WA two Sabbaths each month. We are very much encouraged by the fact that a growing number of our group has had no prior contact with the church of God (not all of us are refugees). We are not afraid of building bridges and do not consider the other churches of God in the region to be a threat to us in any way. Many members of other organizations have visited us from time to time and many non-aligned

Christians, as well, have visited us. Likewise many of our members have visited the other churches in the region. We are an open church and we would like to see more openness among all of the churches of God. We do not attempt to convince others that we are the only place they should be finding fellowship; and we try to assist both refugees and new converts in finding a fellowship where they can grow. We believe that the Church of God is spiritually unified and that administrative diversity cannot and does not cause disunity. Only the rantings of arrogant “ministers” claiming a special mandate from God or claiming to be identified as this or that “church” era can cause disunity in the church. Disunity is a state of mind which comes out of “pride.”

S\*C\*G\*I is also an official C.E.M. church and we are working toward establishing a Northwest Regional Conference of Churches of God to include all of the local Sabbatarian churches of God (in the northwestern United States and southwestern Canada). We want to emphasize our commonality not our differences. We want to promote our common goal and assist others in the Church of God community to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our hope that others will take hold of our vision.

We are also promoting a representational feast site in Ocean Shore, Washington beginning in 1997. We hope to have representation from as many Churches of God as possible. This will be a feast of inclusion and not a feast of exclusion. Although we are currently the de-facto sponsors of this feast site, we hope to get many more “sponsors” involved. Ocean Shores is the perfect feast site for an enjoyable family feast, with many activities for everyone. We hope to have a brochure available in time for the Friends of the Sabbath conference that will take place in Seattle in August.

—Gregory H. Richardson  
email: gregoryr@frugal.com  
voicemail/fax: 206/862-5979

## Real-Life Indiana Jones Says He's Close to Finding the Lost Ark

(c) 1996 Fort Worth Star-Telegram  
PANTEGO, Texas (May 20, 1996 5:41 p.m. EDT) — He has dodged bad guys and booby traps, fought beside Israelis in the Six Day War and discovered what he believes to be the location of the lost Ark of the Covenant.

At one time Texas archaeologist, Vendyl Jones enjoyed drawing parallels between himself and Indiana Jones, the intrepid movie character he says is based on his life. But nowadays, the 65-year-old archaeologist would rather not talk about it. Besides, the movie studio denies any connection.

"That's fiction," Jones said. "We're fact. That's Hollywood. We're for real."

Jones, head of the nonprofit Vendyl Jones Research Institutes, has been digging in the deserts of Israel for more than 20 years. The organization has an annual budget of about \$800,000 and relies on volunteer labor.

Some praise him as an innovator who seems to be on the right track toward finding the Ark of the Covenant, a gold-plated box that held the Ten Commandments and signified the presence of God in the Old Testament.

"Vendyl Jones is not part of the scientific community, is not a professional in the area of archaeology or history," Yitzhak Magen, the archaeologist in charge of digs on the Israeli-occupied West Bank, told The Associated Press two years ago when Jones was trying to get permission to dig. "His work is not based on scientific criteria or acceptable codes, and therefore his discoveries have no truth or scientific importance."

However, to Rabbi Adin Even-Yisrael Steinsaltz of The Israel Institute for Talmudic Publications in Jerusalem, Jones' work has tremendous religious significance, so much so that the revered rabbi wrote a letter endorsing Jones' work as "scientifically valid research, which may result in important findings for the Jewish people and for the world."

Jones said that he didn't have trouble with the Israeli government until he started finding important relics. "My problem is, I've been too successful," he said.

His excavations have focused on the Cave of the Column in Qumran, the region where the Dead Sea Scrolls were

discovered in 1947, and his guide has been the Copper Scroll, discovered in the same region in 1952. Although most scholars dismiss the Copper Scroll, Jones embraced it as a road map to the most holy relics of Judaism.

**His faith was rewarded in 1988 when the scroll's written directions and other ancient Jewish documents led him to a juglet of anointing oil, believed to be the same kind used to anoint kings and prophets in the Old Testament.** The discovery earned Jones a brief mention in the October 1989 National Geographic.

Further excavation revealed more than 600 kilograms of incense believed to have been used in the Temple and a network of walls that Jones believes is the lost encampment of Gilgal.

**According to the Copper Scroll, the next items he will find as he digs deeper into the site will be the Ephod, Urim and Thummim of the Old Testament, the ashes of the Red Heifer, and, finally, the Tent of the Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant.**

Jones is persuasive and speaks with such certainty that it is easy to believe that these ancient treasures are only months away from being discovered. But first, he needs a permit. The Israeli government requires several things of Jones, including an affiliation with an academic institution.

Since returning from Israel in March, Jones has rounded up the support of California State University at Long Beach. He has agreed to help with the school's Dead Sea-Jordan Valley Excavation and Exploration Project, which will begin as soon as permission is granted.

"I see Vendyl as an extremely able, hands-on person with tremendous experience of the nuts-and-bolts kind," said Robert Eisenman, professor of Middle East religion and archaeology for California State and director of the school's Institute for the Study of Judeo-Christian Origins.

"We're not sponsoring his Cave of the Column activities. That's his own ministerial thing," he said. "Frankly, we don't believe that that is leading to any particularly edifying end."

The "ministerial thing" Eisenman referred to is B'Nai Noach, part of the Vendyl Jones Research Institutes. It is an international religious movement, with origins in Judaism, that teaches Gentiles

the Seven Laws of Noah and encourages the study of Hebrew and the Torah.

The Encyclopedia Judaica defines the laws as "the minimal moral duties enjoined by the Bible on all men." The seven laws, derived from Genesis, prohibit idolatry, blasphemy, bloodshed, sexual sins, theft and the eating of flesh from a living animal. The final law encourages support of the legal system.

Born and raised in Sudan, Texas, Jones earned bachelor's and master's degrees at Bible Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, finishing his studies in 1953. The now-defunct school was housed at the old First Baptist Church building (now Calvary Cathedral) in downtown Fort Worth during the days of the Rev. J. Frank Norris. Norris' theological stance led to his ouster from the state Baptist convention.

After several years as a preacher, Jones renounced Christianity in the 1960s and began to study Hebrew. In 1967, he moved to Israel and studied Hebrew as well as archaeology. Today, he maintains dual U.S.-Israeli citizenship.

For Jones, archaeology and ministry are inseparable. "It's one big pot that covers all the burners," he said. "We're brewing a big pot of stew out of a lot of different ingredients." His goal is to recover the artifacts, which he believes will bring world peace based on Ezekiel 37:26-28.

"My main pursuit, timewise, has been the Copper Scroll, and to find those ancient treasures that I believe will bring true peace to the world," he said.

"We're not involved in any kind of messianic thing. We avoid it with a passion. The accomplishment is an end in itself. If we find it, we've accomplished a great feat." 

### Does the Ark Really Matter?

Some Christians believe that all the unfulfilled prophecies about the temple refer to the church—they see no need for a new physical temple. Yet many Jews believe it is necessary for Messiah's return. The Eternal has been patient and worked with his church in spite of many false doctrines it has had over the years. He has honored the prayers of a remnant that sought him, even though their doctrine was not perfect.

Is it also possible that He works with a remnant of Jews that seek him, even though their doctrine is not perfect? Prophecy indicates that the Messiah will continue to work with Judah and Israel separately until He returns (Jer 3:18, Ezk 37:16-22, Hos 1:11, Zech 10:6). —NSE



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. To avoid any difficulty, writers should specify how much of their name and address they would like us to print. 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.

### Shunned by Non-Aligned Brethren

**LETTER:** April 7, 1996  
Norm Edwards:

The conversation I had with you last year was deeply appreciated. We all had so much to sort out, as the flock was being scattered by WCG.

Thanks for having sent the *Servants' News* for about a year. Your efforts are appreciated. I would, though, like to have my subscription cancelled. There is so much to read and so many subscriptions, it is almost impossible to do all of them justice.

All the best to you in stabilizing and developing harmony in the scattered flock(s). It is my prayer that they will all grow in harmony and love toward one another. Perhaps it is yet to happen but I still see too many who will not associate with you if you don't see things exactly their way. This hit home when I received a letter from someone seeking fellowship (via a mailing from you) **who basically wanted nothing to do with me when he realized we may be in different "physical organizations"**. There is still an open invitation to him, to even go out and socialize by having conversation and pizza. To be shunned by WCG friends is one thing but by "others of like mind"...? That is another thing.

A friend in Christ,

J. C., Peoria, Arizona

**RESPONSE:** Thank you for your letter. I realize that both problems have occurred: people that attend with organizations reject those that are "non-aligned," and non-aligned people reject others just because they attend in organizations. **Both are mistakes.**

Since many *Servants' News* readers con-

sider themselves "non-aligned," I hope they will think about this. Most of them were part of organizations at one time in their lives. **How can they reject people for doing the very thing they did for so many years?** Do they think they are somehow better than people in organizations? Too often, we see this wrong attitude: "People that do not understand

every truth I understand must not be converted (or at least are not worth my time)."

Revelation 2 and 3 make it very clear that there can be doctrinal errors in congregations, but our Saviour still calls all of them "churches." While they were commended for rejecting lying leaders (Rev 2:2), they were never told to reject each other as brethren—but we are told to receive the brethren even when they have weaknesses (Rom 14:1-23, 15:7).

I'm glad that we were able to be of service to you for this year. Let us know if you are ever interested again.

—NSE

### Appear Three Times a Year

**LETTER:** February 12, 1996

Dear Friends,

Please put us on the mailing list for *Servants' News*. It is one of the most encouraging publications we have read. We were thrilled to see someone finally admit in print that Deut 16:16 says to appear before the Eternal three times with an offering and not seven times. When organizations, claiming to be seeking truth, pressure members to accept that three doesn't really mean three, we lose confidence in their sincerity.

[literature request omitted]

Many thanks,

—Glenn & Laura Jarboe, Woodburn, KY

**RESPONSE:** Yes, we have been long amazed at how many times we have heard people say that the Hebrew means "three seasons" in the year when the Hebrew word *pa'am* used there does not mean and is never translated "seasons." The scripture goes on to name the three Feasts where an offering is to be collected (Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Tabernacles), but many still say three means seven.

We could go on to ask if the people responsible for giving offerings in verses 16 and 17 are the same people responsible for appointing judges and officers in verse 18, but that is getting away from the subject. Keep studying!

—NSE

### Home Sabbath Group Working Well

**LETTER:** April 29, 1996

Hello,

It's good to here from you again. Yes I would like the *Servants' News* very much. I will send in a donation to help defray the cost. Attached is the article on tithing.

Also, there are eight of us who are meeting on Sabbath. We have no "minister". We all take turns as the "teacher" who brings a topic that they have researched to the group. All are encouraged to ask questions and contribute to the topic of discussion. We also have a "servant" who is responsible for Sabbath Services (time, place, format, etc.). We all think that it's a great system, it's truly iron sharpening iron.

—R. P.

**RESPONSE:** Thank you for your e-mail and the tithing article. I will gladly send you *Servants' News*, but I do need your address. If it is O.K. with you, I will print your e-mail so others can see that these kinds of services really work.

—NSE

### Conversion Without the Sabbath?

**LETTER:** December 6, 1995

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for the articles you have sent me, fascinating. [literature request omitted] Also, I would like you to comment on "when is a person converted," before understanding the relevance of the Sabbath or after? In other words, can one be converted and still not understand the Sabbath?

Regards,

—Edward A. Slade, Mentone, CA

**RESPONSE:** There is no doubt that a person grows in knowledge and truth **after** he or she has already been converted (John 16:13, Col 1:10, 1Pet 2:2, 2Pet 3:18). We would guess that you have changed in your understanding and practices over the years. Therefore, it is obvious that a person does not need to understand all truth to be converted. The question is, how much truth does each person need to understand?

The Bible sets no "minimum requirements" that will guarantee conversion or salvation. The Eternal is not interested in people that seek him a little bit when it is required, but people that seek him with their whole heart (Deut 4:29, Jer 29:13). He does not judge men by some outward standard, but by what is in their mind and heart (1Sam 16:7, Jer 17:10, 1Kngs 8:39, Rev 2:23). He gives His spirit to those that are willing to obey Him (Acts 5:32). What will He do with a person that has repented, been baptised and wants to obey, but believes that the

Sabbath is now on Sunday?

We could answer by saying, "The Eternal will reveal the true Sabbath to them before they are converted." But what scripture proves that? Think of the magnitude of all the errors that we or people we know believed while we were converted: kept holy days (especially Pentecost) by differing methods, believed we must follow the instruction of a human hierarchy in spite of clear Bible teaching, believed men had the authority to bind and loose marriages when there is no Biblical evidence for it, etc. It appears that the Eternal often takes a very long time to reveal truth to some of us. Our responsibility is to accept and implement these truths in our lives once we have come to understand them. Herbert Armstrong recounts the story of a Sunday-keeping man with the gift of healing. When he taught the man the truth of the Sabbath, that man agreed it was right, but did not want to make such a big change in his life. Shortly after, the man lost his healing gift.

The Bible is very clear that the Sabbath is the day to rest and worship. Those that know the truth do not have a choice. But there are people seeking the Eternal with all their heart that have been deceived by the teaching that "the Sabbath has been changed to Sunday." We should let the Eternal decide whether they are converted or not, rather than presumptuously saying they cannot be converted.

—NSE

### Glad to Find Thinking Christians

**LETTER:** December 8, 1995  
Dear Sirs:

We were loaned some of your *Servants' News*, and find them very interesting, to say the least! We would like very much to be on your mailing list—and would it be possible to receive copies of back issues? I would be especially interested in the May 1995 issue which I saw referenced in the Letters section. Actually, I would like to have all the 1995 issues, if that would be possible—I find the topics fascinating—and am so happy to know that there are other "thinking Christians" who share our views. Thank you for providing such a valuable service!

Sincerely,

Mrs. R. D. Taylor, Prescott Valley, AZ

**RESPONSE:** We will be glad to send you all of our back issues. There are thousands of "thinking Christians." Each person is responsible for using their own mind and we all need to do that more. Even more important than that, we need to use and ask for the spiritual gifts that our Savior has

promised.

—NSE

### Why Limit Info to One Source?

**LETTER:** December 11, 1995

Dear Mr. Edwards,

Thank you for sending me the current and back issues of *Servants' News*.

When I was a member of the WWCG, they did not want us to read anything other than WWCG material or listen to any one else's taped sermons. I wonder why? Your paper has a lot to say with current news that is of interest to Sabbath keepers and God's people.

I listen to tapes from Mr. Jim Rector that contain the spiritual food that was and probably still is lacking in the WWCG and the CGI, with Mr. Dart being an exception! [literature request omitted]

Thank you very much. I think there are a lot of brethren who need to know about you and *Servants' News* so be encouraged, news travels. Thanks again.

Yours,

Michael V. Lyons, Chester, WV

**RESPONSE:** It is a lot easier to feel like we are doing everything right if we listen only to one source. There are few conflicts and little study required on our part. When we listen to multiple sources, there will be differences—things that we must study and make a personal decision about.

Of course, leaders of religions as well as nations like to control the information that reaches "their people" so they will believe what they want them to believe and do what they want them to do. "A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel" (Prov 1:5).

—NSE

### Appreciates Toli Bohonik's Writing

**LETTER:** January 2, 1996

Dear Friends:

Just wanted to let you know how much enjoyed the article in the November newsletter titled, "What is the Role of Church Members in Governing the New Testament?" It was so very interesting and when I finished the last page—to my surprise—I saw "Toli Bohonik's" name there. I cried. I have been wondering about him and his wife, whether they have let WWCG...now I know. He certainly had to study awhile to come up with such an inspiring article. "Bravo Toli!"

The small group that I am with is leaning towards such a government. God's people are scattered but that doesn't mean

we do not have God's Spirit.

God speed to each of you in the work you are doing.

Thanks.

—Mary Coffill, 12 Leffler Rd., Hattiesburg, MS 39401-8842

**RESPONSE:** Thank you for your encouragement. I am sure that Toli Bohonik appreciates it also.

—NSE

### Cannot Repeat Our Past Mistakes

**LETTER:** January 2, 1996

Dear Mr. Edwards,

Having been a member of WCG since 1972, it was not the easiest thing that I've ever done to walk away from it last January. Upon leaving the WCG organization, I was so thrilled to be accepted into Global and be able to fellowship with others of like mind.

However, many things have plagued my mind this past year and once more I found myself disagreeing greatly with "headquarters."

Only this time, I have not been quiet about it. I have been terribly wounded in the past and I simply refuse to put myself ever again in the position we all were in in WCG. Mistakes were made but unless they are acknowledged, they will continue to be made.

I have written letters detailing my feelings as I simply am not afraid any longer of "consequences." It really doesn't matter to me what the consequences are for I know my first and foremost concern is my obligations to God, His truth, and how it applies to me as I strive to "work out my own salvation." Anything else is secondary. The "group" I fellowship with is important only if it is a believing group who studies to live truthfully by the Bible. It cannot be the Church of God excluding all others. It cannot be the authority from God Himself (so far, I know of no one who has talked to Christ face to face as Moses and the apostles did).

There are errors in the GCG and I sincerely hope they will see this very soon and take steps to correct it.

I feel that, as in many other cases in the Bible, God allowed this hierarchy form of government to be implemented in His church but I also believe it took this awful heresy to shake us loose from this form of government. I don't think it would have been possible to shake us loose from Mr. Armstrong in the same way. We were that fearful of being marked as rebellious if we were ever to go against the "human head." It took someone coming into the very same

position, "inheriting" all powers of binding and loosing (even error) that Mr. Armstrong had and then to turn totally heretical for us to finally see that we should not look to any man but to Christ and the Father.

I have just recently been loaned some copies of *Servants' News* and so many of the things that it contains are the same things that I have been seeing in my own personal studies (with no help from men).

**Some of the statements are nearly word for word for what I have already written to our local minister and to Mr. Meredith.**

The realization of who we are (Christ's assembly of believers) and who we aren't (a corporate structure) has gone a long way toward freeing my mind of the cobwebs of error.

I am rethinking so many things. In the past, Mr. H.W.A. used to tell us, "Don't believe me, believe your Bibles." The big problem there was that we were to prove him right. For the first time in my life I feel that my opinion does count as well as the opinions of everyone of the assembly of Christ. For we are not automatons following a single man wheresoever he deems even into error.

The admonition "Obey your ministers, even if they are wrong, God will back them up," was diametrically opposite to Biblical teaching.

There are so many wrong ideas and concepts that were ingrained in us for so many years that it will take some time to really come to a true understanding of what God is really doing in and through us.

I will continue for now to attend meetings with the Global structure but I will never anymore consider any one of the organized groups "the best" or "the only Church of God."

I would like very much to begin receiving *Servants' News* as I think it will prove to be one of the most valuable tools that we have at this time for our own personal growth in grace and knowledge. If possible, I would like a copy of the letter you sent to Mr. Meredith and if he answers, a copy of his reply.

Mr. Edwards, we want truth, not opinions, something we can lay down our lives for. Though God allows error, I believe He is there ready to give truth and clear understanding to those who desire enough to seek it. He allows, not sanctions, wrong concepts and untruths to creep into His congregations but He warns us ahead of time to watch for them.

Quite a few people in the past were "put out" simply for not agreeing with the status quo. Did God regard them as rebellious

because they would not "go along" with error? I wonder about all those people who weren't quite as blinded into utter submission as we were. I hope they did not just give up and go back to their old ways. If they remained loyal to God and their Bibles, then they never left the Church.

I know the errors of the WCG were unintentional and God forgives but it has really hurt everybody. It has hurt those who finally had to leave and those who have stayed out of loyalty to the name.

But we're different now. We're asking questions and demanding proper answers—not answers they've inherited from Mr. Armstrong. They're going to be kept busy trying to prove their beliefs.

I don't wish to "group hop" but I no longer feel that I'm confined to any one group at all. Nor am I confined to one group's literature—I must weigh everything, prove everything, stand on my own two feet, trust in God and look to Him as the only authority in my life. If I make a mistake, it will be my mistake and not some man demanding that I make his mistake.

Mr. H.W.A. was indeed used by God as a servant. God did not speak to him face to face as in the case of Moses and the apostles. He should never have taken unto himself the titles and authority that he did. In rereading some of the old *Good News*, it was quite evident that with the exalted mentality he had for himself and the "ministry," the spiritual work among the people would be extremely limited or, even in many cases, non-existent. Yes, he performed a work but the work of preparing a group to be kings and priests simply wasn't done.

In his own words, Mr. Armstrong proclaimed that God had raised him up to do the work and the Church was raised up to support him.

In the Oct.-Nov. edition (1979) of *The Good News* in his Personal entitled "How Did You Come to Know the Truth?", Mr. Armstrong uses a letter from a member, exulting and giving praise to Mr. Armstrong to explain how we have received truth. The member more than not gives the praise of God's truth to Mr. Armstrong. This was the general conclusion of the matter from the majority of us.

At one point in praising him, the member states, "I totally believe that Christ puts His truth into this Church through you, and so I am looking to you more and more now than I ever have before...my purpose is to see things as you see them, to have your mind on various issues (and hence Christ's mind)."

No man should ever be elevated to this kind of adulation. This whole article was

given to this member's letter validating Mr. Armstrong's apostleship and absolute authority over everybody and everything.

His errors do not negate some good but neither do they need to be pooh-poohed as just mistakes. They were serious and have done much harm and should be addressed. If we have any contention with a brother, we are to go to that brother and settle it, but we could never go to Mr. Armstrong with these contentions as, in his words, we would be going against Christ Himself. With that mentality pervasive throughout the hierarchy, there was no other recourse but to accept whatever just to stay in—or else just get out.

Those days are over, Mr. Edwards, so now maybe the "common" people will be able to really grow and produce fruit through the gifts listed in Rom 12 and 1Cor 12.

I truly appreciate your service through your literature. I want to be a part of it. So please send me anything you have. Once more I feel I have something I can sink my teeth in.

Enclosed is a donation to defray the cost.

I wish for you many blessings as you seek truth.

P.S. I think a good heading for a section of your newsletter could be "Food For Thought" which could contain very short studies on various topics. Your newsletter is a fantastic outlet for many unsung writers in the various groups of God's Church. It is time that each of us discover the various talents and gifts God has granted us and begin to use them mightily in His service.

Sincerely,

Tawanda Ray, Hamilton, AL

**RESPONSE:** We have heard and read stories like yours many times before. We agree with every major point you made.

You mentioned those in years past that were "put out for not agreeing with the status quo." We have received letters and phone calls from brethren that have continued to keep the Sabbath for 10, 15, even 20 years by themselves after being put out of the WCG. Others fellowshipped with other Sabbath-keeping groups, though they were not in agreement with all of their doctrines or practices. Many of these people are now finding local, Messiah-led fellowship groups and are overjoyed.

Sadly, we know of some who were so offended by actions of men that claimed to be "ministers of the One True God," that they gave up on the Eternal and the Bible completely. Those "ministers" that offended them will certainly have to answer for what they have done (Matt 18:6).

We are very interested in accepting short Bible study topics, though we will probably not create a separate section of *Servants' News* for them. We can print them as short articles or as letters if they come in that form. Thank you for sharing your ideas with us.

—NSE

### **Out of WCG for 15 Years**

**LETTER:** October 30, 1995  
Dear Mr. Edwards:

Some friends in UCG gave us a copy of *Servants' News*. We appreciate your perspective and analysis of events in the Church of God. Please put our names on your mailing list to receive *Servants' News*. [Literature request omitted.]

My wife and I are not members of any Church of God organization. We left the WCG organization over fifteen years ago. We have recently been attending UCG and GCG services.

We look forward to receiving your materials and hearing from you.

Mr & Mrs M., Idaho

**RESPONSE:** I am sure that you enjoy fellowshiping with brethren again, even though you may not be in complete agreement with what some organizations teach. I think it is important for you to find a place where you can learn and grow as well as serve others.

—NSE

### **Oh How Love I Your Law!**

**LETTER:** December 10, 1995  
Dear Friends,

[literature request omitted]

P.S. I really enjoy *Servants' News*. I've especially been interested in *Oh, How I Love Your Law!* It makes these laws more understandable and applicable in spirit, to life today, as well as understanding the letter of the law.

Thank you.

Leona Urbanek, Byron, IL

**RESPONSE:** We feel that the passages covered in this series are a revelation of our Father's wisdom, righteousness, justice and love.

—NSE

### **Wants [Global Wolf Hunt] Info**

**LETTER:** March 25, 1996  
Dear Sir/Madam:

A friend has recently told me of the literature produced by your organization.

Could you please put me on your mailing list? I am especially interested in receiving

a copy of your article which contained information on the Global Wolf Hunt.

Please send me anything and whatever you have available. I enclose a check to help defray the costs of your publications. Please let me know if there is a membership fee, dues or subscription price.

Thank you so much for your time.

Very truly yours,

—J.M., Maryland

**RESPONSE:** The article you are seeking is entitled *Beware of "Friendly" Visits* and is in our February 1996 issue. We are sending you a copy. Please remember that we are not attempting to condemn one organization with this article, but point out an unfortunate practice used within many organizations.

—NSE

### **Leader's Went Bad, not Government**

**LETTER:** January 2, 1996  
Mr. Edwards:

I talked with you in March 1995 after receiving *Servants' News* for the first time concerning the deplorable condition of the WCG with all of the heresies that Mr. Tkach was bringing into the church. At that time you told me that if I were to leave the WCG there was only one place to go and that was to Global, which is where I was planning to go at that time. I went into Global in March and can say that I am back home.

I have been receiving *Servants' News* since then and became very much in disagreement with you since you received some criticism from United and changed your writing completely. I recently read your writing on church government and it seems to me that you have somewhat of a problem with government in the church, but remember it was not the government that went bad, it was Mr. Tkach, and also remember Jesus Christ is the Head of the church and is always in charge. Mr. Tkach did nothing more than his job, as Judas. Mr. Tkach's character was to do what was needed at the time, remember **God** made everything for a purpose, even the evil one for the day of judging.

I wish you all of the best. Keep doing what you believe, but for me, I don't wish to receive *Servants' News* any more.

Your Brother in Christ,

—Marrisa, IL

**RESPONSE:** In March of 1995 I was regularly attending the Global Church of God myself and felt it was probably the best multi-congregation organization to attend. I had not yet completed my research on government and ordination and did not realize that the concept of an "ordained ministry"

does not exist in the Greek New Testament. While I would not make the same recommendation today, I still feel that Global is a much better choice than the WCG in most cases because Global has largely maintained the doctrines of the WCG from the middle 1980's. I understand why you feel "back home" there.

For years, many of us were assured that if we "followed the government of God," we would escape the tribulation and go on into the Kingdom. Joseph Tkach, Sr. maintained the teachings of Herbert Armstrong for almost two years. But during the next several years, you and a great many others decided to reject Tkach's new teachings. What authority did you have to reject the human head of "the Government of God"? Is there some specific date where everyone can prove that the WCG ceased to be "God's church?" Did you start attending Global because Rod Meredith commanded you to? Did you give Gerald Flurry or other church leaders an equal chance to command you to attend with them? Or did you study your Bible and make your decision based on your understanding of Scripture?

If the present head of your government begins to teach heresy, or if he dies and another begins to teach heresy in his place, will you follow him no matter what? Or will you again evaluate his teaching and the teaching of others and make a decision where to attend? It seems you are being responsible to the Bible and your Savior for deciding where you will attend and whom you will support. I believe that is what the Bible teaches. If the brethren are responsible for these big decisions, is a human hierarchy responsible for all of our smaller doctrinal decisions?

I certainly believe that our Messiah (Jesus Christ) is the head of the Church. I cannot find where the Bible says that He can only work through one man or one corporation at a time. I believe He helped you to see that you needed to leave the WCG corporate structure. I believe He will continue to guide you (and thousands of other believers) directly if you will let Him.

Several people have told me I "have a problem with government," but I have had only two or three try to show me from the Scriptures where I am wrong. Most of them were concerned only with minor points. My writings came from many hours of Bible study, not from being upset with anyone. I have sent my writings to Global and received no response. If you would like to show me where I am wrong, I would be glad to listen.

Thank you for your positive ending. We will take you off of the mailing list.

—NSE

**Husband & Wife in Different Groups**

**LETTER:** December 20, 1995  
Dear *Servants' News* (Mr. Edwards):

Thank you! I have just received from my mother a copy of your "newsletter" for November. I have been thoroughly enjoying the articles.

A little bit of background about myself—I am currently attending Global but finding limited "meat" of the word and am finding it through your letter and other sources (have been learning from Jim Rector's tapes). I have felt that when all this split happened, we as a body, would draw closer and closer together and really grow in the meat of God's word. I have not seen this happening but am finding there is a sense of satisfaction with what we have and the milk is being preached—you would think after being in the "church" for over twenty years a greater depth would be taking place. I had very high hopes, but now I have found others searching like I am and for this I am very thankful. Currently, my husband is attending with the Philadelphia Church and our views differ greatly at times and would like to request your prayers on my behalf. He is not thoroughly aware of how different our views are. I try to be very careful what I say.

I remember you, Mr. Edwards, from my first Global Feast two years ago and remember them saying you were about to move back East. Are you still attending Global? I know the "issue" on government is a big thing here. I must say I do not agree with the way it has been set up and am beginning to see that it really is not Biblical, this hierarchical form but am wondering if the years and years of it is so ingrained that most will not change. I am optimistic though....

The reason for this letter is to request back issues of your newsletter. [literature request omitted] I would greatly appreciate it. I have access to a copy machine and would be able to make copies for others I know would like them. I am not requesting to be on your mailing list because my mother is and she is sharing hers with me. I know this will save on postage and copying expenses.

[literature request omitted]

I realize this is quite a lot to send out and will be forwarding a donation as soon as I can to help offset this cost. I am very much looking forward to receiving this information.

Thank you for your dedication to God and stepping out to serve the brethren!

Sincerely,

—Mrs. M., Washington

**RESPONSE:** We all need a greater depth

of understanding that you speak of. We will certainly pray for the situation regarding you and your husband's differences in understanding. We have probably heard of over 100 cases of spouses with differing view points and attending different Sabbath-keeping organizations. Unfortunately, some organizations even encourage members to divorce spouses that do not attend with them.

While our Messiah said that believing him would create difficulty in families (Matt 10:34-39), we should be trying to live at peace when possible (Rom 12:18). It is interesting that Matthew 10 says nothing about turning a husband against his wife or a wife against her husband. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 7:12-13 conclusively shows that we should not seek to divorce unconverted mates that want to remain married. When we realize that the church is a spiritual body and not a corporate organization, it is even more ridiculous to divorce or fight over which group is best.

Nevertheless, there are issues to be resolved: Where will the couple and their children (if any) attend services? Where will they financially contribute? Where will they attend the Feasts?

The Bible indicates that the husband is the head of the wife (Eph 5:23), so he is responsible for making decisions that affect the entire family. Nevertheless, the wife is not given salvation by her husband, but by our Messiah. The wife also has an obligation to "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Any plan that attempts to make peace in a marriage by specifically defining the husband's responsibilities and the wife's responsibilities will usually end in numerous fights over issues where both are partly responsible. The only marriages that work are those in which each person tries to do a lot more than they are responsible for.

A husband must realize that he cannot change his wife's deeply held beliefs simply by always commanding her to attend services with him. If he is sure that his beliefs are right, then he should give her as much leeway as practical to help her to be convinced herself. If transportation is affordable, it will not hurt to let his wife attend elsewhere and see the differences between his and other groups. Our Messiah said people would know we are his disciples if we have love for one another (John 13:35). A wife should be able to see that love among people that are close to the Eternal. A husband should not try to force his wife to do something that she believes she can **show from the scriptures to be a sin**. Does he want a wife that lives by her convictions or a robot?

Wives should not confront their hus-

bands as much as possible, but only when necessary to obey the Eternal. "Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives" (1Pet 3:1-2, NRSV). If your husband lets you attend where you want, count it a blessing. If he insists that he attend with him some or all of the time, do so as long as you are sure that it is not a sin. If your husband asks you to do something that is a sin, be sure that you can explain it calmly, logically from the scriptures.

Where should children attend? With younger children that do not listen to the messages, it matters little what message they hear. It is more important that they attend a place where they can enjoy (as well as respect) the Sabbath. As children grow older and listen to the messages, it does not hurt them to hear different viewpoints, to study, to learn to evaluate and make decisions for themselves. History has shown that people do not continue to attend a certain congregation just because they were forced to attend it as children. Teenagers are experts at recognizing adults that do not practice what they preach. Parents should teach the Bible and guide their children's religious education, but they cannot ultimately control what they do.

I realize that this is not a complete solution, but I hope that it helps. I agree with your approach of not telling your husband how great your differences are if he would only be angered by them and is not yet ready to learn from them.

As far as my relationship with the Global Church of God is concerned, I received a letter several months ago from the local pastor telling me that I was no longer a member of Global because some unnamed people had read my writings and decided to leave Global. There was no mention of any Biblical error on my part, just a concern over the loss of members. Obviously, I think there are many converted brethren that attend Global and I would not object to visiting there at some time in the future.

—NSE

**Leave the Judging to Christ**

**LETTER:** January 3, 1996  
Dear Sir,

I have always been without a church where I lived. I received my tapes from C.G.I. and went to the Feasts with them in Denver and Lake Tahoe.

I have found a small group who

receives Fred Coulter's tapes, etc. They also receive tapes from Global, etc.

I judge no one and leave the judging to Christ. "I know who I believe."

I do find it refreshing hearing from all the Churches of God. We are all the Body of Christ.

God has scattered us for a reason. We must endure until the end.

I accepted Church beliefs in 1970 when I heard GTA with WCG in Pasadena.

Sincerely,

—Lois Kelton, Grand Junction, CO

**RESPONSE:** It is evident from your letter that you are at peace with all of the different groups—that you are no longer struggling with which is the "right" one or why they do not all "see it your way." It sometimes takes years of prayer and study to transform oneself from a "human hierarchalist" to a belief in a Messiah-centered congregation.

It is a wonderful thing to realize that we can have this peaceful attitude to all of the other brethren in the various groups, while still being full of zeal to study, grow, overcome and teach the truth to others!

—NSE

## Women Reading in Home Services

**LETTER:** February 29, 1996  
Dear Mr. Edwards:

We would like to thank you very much for *Servants' News* and we look forward to each issue. Enclosed is a contribution to help you in your work.

[literature request omitted]

By the way, we found your report on Assembling on the Sabbath to be not only enlightening but exciting. We have a home Sabbath fellowship and are thinking of incorporating women reading from the scriptures into our worship service. We haven't been able to find anything in scripture that would be contrary to this practice.

Your brother and sister in Christ,

—Walt & Joan Hoffman, Palm Bay, FL

**RESPONSE:** We hope your home Sabbath fellowship works well, and we would invite any letters or articles you might write about how it works out—good or bad. We could not find anything against women reading the scriptures in services either. They are expressly permitted to pray and prophesy in services (1Cor 11:2,5,17-18), but teaching is spoken of negatively (1Tim 2:12). Most of the references to the women "keeping silence" in the churches refer to unnecessary chatter, not participation in the service.

—NSE

## Being Fed at Home

**LETTER:** February 28, 1996

Dear Norman Edwards,

Thank you very much for sending us *Servants' News*. I really enjoy reading it. My husband and I do not attend any church congregation at this time because I really don't see the need to. We receive tapes and literature from various people that have been a great help to us since we've left the organization of WCG about three years ago. Your newsletter, along with other info, keeps us informed and always learning new truths. Some of this learning has been hard, but I feel that God has a purpose for all of us. I feel that He will always open our eyes to His truth one way or another! The Passover is upon us soon and I, myself, feel that this is always a special reminder to us of why we're here and where we're headed. Thanks again for the work you're doing to help others. I'm sending a donation to help towards the cost of printing and mailing.

Sincerely,

Randy & Kim Sekavec, Columbus, OH

**RESPONSE:** Paul indicates that we should continue to assemble with the brethren (Heb 10:25), but we realize that is not always possible. Some people have been quite successful in creating a group by advertising an in-home Sabbath Bible Study in the phone book and/or newspapers. Many long-time WCG members do not realize how many people come to a sound Biblical understanding just from reading their Bibles. They are often looking for a place to fellowship on the Sabbath, but simply cannot find one. You may have to study your Bible as never before to answer questions, but it will be good for everyone involved!

—NSE

## Attending Ozark's Church of God

**LETTER:** April 1, 1996

Dear *Servants' News*,

I have just received February and March newsletters and a young woman at Church has given me a copy of the January edition. What I would like to know is if there is a way that I could get the back issues for 1995. So many of the articles I read are continuations of earlier articles. Please find a check enclosed. This I hope will help cover some of your expenses. Once we get through paying Uncle Sam his unfair share, I hope to be able to donate more often. For such a long time I have felt dead and asleep, not for sure why I kept going to Church (CGI). I didn't seem to get

anything out of it. But since we have left and started the Ozark's Church of God, where we all partake in the decisions and service, I can feel myself waking up and, I hope, growing again. And your *Servants' News* is a great help. It lets me know I'm not the only one confused. And it lets me know that's OK. I look forward to receiving some of those issues, and I hope it's not too much trouble.

Your friend in Christ,

—Rita McClenathan, Blue Eye, MO

**RESPONSE:** We will gladly send you the back issues. We hope you will learn and grow more in your new congregation environment.

—NSE

## Old vs New Covenant Questions

**LETTER:** June 27, 1995

Dear Brother Edwards,

I have carefully studied your article, *Assembling on the Sabbath*, and also the newest teachings from the WCG office. Naturally each new article gives rise to new questions.

Page 2 of your article... "Isaiah wrote, 'everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant,'" because that is the covenant that was in effect in Isaiah's lifetime and was the one he knew. And, of course, the apostle Paul taught Jews and Gentiles on that day because it was still the most convenient day to meet. Most of the community did not work on that day, and it was traditional for Paul to be in the temple or synagogue on the seventh day of the week. All the instructions you quote are from the Old Testament and the Old Covenant.

**RESPONSE:** Isaiah 56 is talking about salvation and individual ever-lasting names promised to the Gentiles. This was **not** part of the Old Covenant which was made with the nation of Israel. Isaiah obviously had understanding of the New Covenant from prophecies like Isaiah 43:18-24 where the Eternal mentions he has "formed a people for himself" in place of Jacob that will not follow him.

**LETTER:** There is a misprint or typo on the upper right column of page 2. It is not Ezk 40:23-24, it is 44:23-24. Your reference to "the priests" teaching the people leads me to ask, why would the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, be in a teaching position in the times of the Christians after the change in the priesthood (Heb 7:11-12)?

And of what use are the bulls and burnt offerings made by the Zadokites (Ezk 43:18-20), after Jesus had offered one sac-

rifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God (Heb 10:12), and verse 14, "for by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." We must go forward with Jesus, right? Not back to the Levite priests and Zadokites.

**RESPONSE:** Thank you for your correction to the scripture, we have changed it in future printings. There are numerous scriptural references to a physical temple, levitical priests, scarifices, and other "Old Covenant" things in the Millennium. The blood of animals never could take away sin (Isa 1:11, Heb 9:13). These things were designed as teaching tools—a schoolmaster to teach the need for our Saviour (Gal 3:24-25). Historically, the Priests and Levites rarely ever carried out their mission correctly. I believe that it will be done correctly in the Millenium to teach others the Eternal's way. There will be millions of unconverted people that can learn from these lessons. It is one thing to say "sin is bad," turn on the television, and forget about it; it is another thing to see someone say "this is the result of sin," watch him kill an animal and pour out its blood in front of us. These things will not replace our Savior's sacrifice—they never have, but they will teach.

**LETTER:** On page 5 of your article...*Are Assemblies Required or Optional?...we KNOW they are required!* (Heb 10:25) But we also know there is no stoning or death penalty required as there was in ancient times. The Catholic Church said it was a "mortal sin" to miss Mass on Sunday. The Catholic people had to confess it as a serious sin in the confessional. If people died with that sin unconfessed on their conscience, they were condemned to hell. How can Christians "exhort one another" if they do not have regular (or fairly regular) attendance at services? Answer: They can't! It is always best to be at services, if possible. The Pharisees had perfect Sabbath attendance, yet Jesus said our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. We can have perfect Sabbath attendance and still miss the mark. The law of LOVE takes priority over everything. So, while assemblies are required, they are not commanded in the same way they were, (and as the Catholics commanded the keeping of Sunday Mass), but are put into our hearts and have become part of our heart's desire. WCG does have assemblies on Sabbath, and they DO keep the annual Holy Days. And it is my heart's desire to be at services as often as possible on the Sabbath. I would like to see more genuine actual worshiping and praising to the Lord...but we're

getting there.

**RESPONSE:** I agree with you completely here. We do need to assmble, but no one has been given the job of punishing believers that do not. Yes, we do need more praise.

**LETTER:** I think what made me so angry when these "changes" began coming was the talk about Old Covenant-**NEW** Covenant as if it was brand new when it wasn't! The "New" Covenant has been around for 2,000 years! We should have known and understood it long ago! At any rate, I can understand why Paul said not to get involved in useless geneologies and disputes about the law...it only leads to dissensions. But we should be growing the fruits of the Spirit. Peter acknowledged that some of Paul's writings were hard to understand (2Pet 3:15-16), but it's not hard to understand what Peter says in his second epistle, chapter 1:5-8..."giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Covenant is different from the Covenant God made with the Israelites in ancient times. That Covenant is obsolete. (Heb 8:13) The Covenant for Christians was sealed with Jesus' Own Blood (Matt 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20). Jesus kept the Old Covenant Himself because it was the one He was born under. The "NEW" Covenant did not go into effect until His blood was shed and He died for us.

**RESPONSE:** We agree that the new covenant has been in the scriptures for years (Jer 31:31, Lev 19:18) and that Peter's admonition is of highest importance for believers today. Hebrews 8:13 is a little misleading in some translations. The KJV is quite accurate on this verse: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." Notice it does not say "has vanished away." Was the Old Covenant still in effect after the death of our Saviour? Yes it was. By what covenant will modern-day Israel be thrust into the "great tribulation"? The Old! The old covenant promised physical blessings for obedience and punishment for disobedience! There are also promises of redemption from punishment. This covenant is flawed, but it will continue until the new covenant is made with the House of Israel (Heb 8:10), which has not been done yet.

**LETTER:** Little by little, I am getting a clearer picture and the anger is fading. The Bereans were very wise to study the Scriptures daily "to see if those things (the things they were being taught) were so." That's what we need to do, too, study the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so! Thank you for your article.

I hope to hear from you. I would like to hear your answers to my two questions early in my letter.

Perhaps it is time for your anger to cool, also, and to search and see if maybe the changes in teachings "are so." Sometimes our anger sets up a road-block of sorts and we can't get past it.

In Jesus' love,

—J. C., Sterling, MI

**RESPONSE:** I am sorry that this response has taken so long. There are so many others to respond to. I am not angry at what has happened in the various congregations, but I do think that many of the "New Teachings" in the WCG are very wrong. I would also have to say that some changes are very good, but doctrines such as the nature of the Father and the Son and the correct day of worship are not things that we should easily compromise.

—NSE

## **Satan is Continuing to Divide?**

**LETTER:** December 3, 1995  
Dear Norm Edwards,

How are you?

Satan is continuing to divide and conquer God's people. He is trying to stop any group from having enough money to blanket the world with a warning message.

Keep up the good work. I don't know how long we have, but time is short.

Wholeheartedly,

—K. H., El Paso, TX

**RESPONSE:** I have a difficult time believing that Satan is able to stop our Savior from what he said he would do in Matthew 24:14. If the Eternal wanted to maintain the WCG as it was in 1986, He could have inspired Herbert Armstrong to choose a leader that would have done that. I and many others think it was certainly His will that the WCG slowly dissolve and no single group clearly take its place. He wants everyone to study the Bible and understand why they believe what they believe. The Creator of the Universe has plenty of power to preach the Gospel to the world without a big organization or a lot of money. [See "RESPONSE" to the letter below.]

Thank you for your encouragement. It does seem that time is short.

—NSE

**Ezekiel Warning from Small Groups?**

**LETTER:** February 9, 1996  
Dear Mr. Edwards:

Thank you very much for *Servants' News*. My wife and I appreciate it very much and the hard work that goes into its production.

It is refreshing to read material that is not the product of a "mind set" that originated in Pasadena, based on a premise that only the ordained were worthy of gifts of the Spirit.

One "raison d'être" for the large corporate churches is to act as the watchman of Ezekiel 3. I do not think you have covered this subject and it does seem to be an area the small unaligned groups cannot carry out a work in. Perhaps you could comment.

Enclosed herewith is a donation to help with the work.

Sincerely,

—K. C. Jones, Devon, UK

**RESPONSE:** Your question is very good. For a long time I felt that a large organization was necessary in order to "do a work" in the way the Herbert Armstrong did. After all how else could it be done?

Then I looked into the scriptures and

**"Salvation" from page 15**

brethren. Diotrephes was in charge of that local church. Diotrephes was evil!

People are saved by following Christ, not a church, nor a church leader. They who hear what Christ has taught, and believe the promises of the Father, shall be passed from death to life (Jn 5:24). No man can pluck them from Jesus Christ's hand (Jn 10:27-28).

But believers can lose out on salvation if they continue in, or return to, the erroneous religious traditions of men (Matt 15:3-9). The Bible warns of false Christs (deliverers) and lying prophets (religious leaders) who will attempt to lead the chosen ones astray. Unfortunately these liars are successful when the chosen ones allow themselves to be lead astray (Matt 24:24). Paul told his listeners to work out their own salvation with fear of the consequences of not working at salvation (Phil 2:12).

**Everybody is One-On-One with God.**

Each of us is individually responsible for deciding to obey God, or for not obeying (Mk 7:9). No one will be justified before God for following error taught by their assembly. All of us will stand in front of God on our own mer-

found that Ezekiel, the apostles and even our Saviour did not use monetary means to gain attention. Sometimes they used healings and miracles as signs of their heavenly authority and those signs drew crowds. Other times, it was simply their message and conviction that convinced people that they spoke for the Eternal (John 10:41-42). "But," most people will argue, "TV and radio were not available then, so God had to work in some other way."

While TV and radio were not available in ancient times, there were plenty of ways one could use money to get a following.

In 2 Samuel 15:1-6 we see how Absalom used money to gain a following after himself. He traveled in a fancy chariot with fifty men running before him. This parade would have attracted attention wherever he went. He sat in the gates of the city and spoke soothing words to the people. Today, we witness the same thing. Anyone with enough money for TV, Radio and expensive personal appearances can get attention—whether he is running for political office or promoting religion. But we have no example of the Eternal amassing a large amount of money to attract attention to preach the

its. Each of us will be called to account for why we acted (or did **not** act) in this life. We will need to have credible answers. Trying to blame a false teacher we followed will not be an acceptable defense. If we have been following what God has said, Christ will stand with us as our advocate. He will tell the Father we are known to him (1Jn 2:1-3).

The Bible says to remember sound doctrine (1Tim 4:16; Deut 4:9). We are to be **careful** not to allow pride and peer pressure lure us into following lies (Pro 16:18). We are to trust no man (Ps 146:3-5). When a blind guide falls into the ditch, those who are following Him also will fall (Lk 6:39). When lies are heard often enough, the mind will accept them, the lies becoming inseparable from truth (1Cor 15:33). Maintain a loose association with those who contradict the word of God. Righteousness and **un**righteousness have little in common (2Cor 6:14). People can not walk together when they disagree (Amos 3:3).

The truth of God is not a beddy-by story! When someone teaches heresy against what the Father has said through Christ, we are to retreat from their pres-

Gospel.

When the Eternal again grants the gifts of healings, miracles, prophecy and boldness of speech that were present in the first century congregations, the general public will listen. When the future is accurately predicted, when AIDS patients are instantly healed, when disaster-destroyed buildings are miraculously reassembled, it will be a "top story". The people that the Eternal uses to perform these miracles will have a chance to address the nation. Some will not disregard their message, others will seek to learn more. Even when corrupt leaders do not like a true prophet's message, they still want to hear it (1Kngs 22).

While a great many people have been impressed by a large TV ministry and learned much truth, so have many others been impressed by other large TV ministries and learned much error. All that is required to start and perpetuate such a ministry is money—even talented speakers and actors are available for hire. We must remember Zechariah 4:6: "...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

—NSE

ence (2Jn 10-11). To fear God and depart from evil is wisdom (Job 28:28). Turn away from those who have the form of godliness, but 'deny' the power (2Tim 3:1-5). 'Deny' is Strong's word #720. The primary Hebrew meanings are: abnegate, reject, disavow, contradict. This is a **dire** warning. Those who have obtained understanding, but later turn on the path leading back into the world of lies have few options left open to them (2Thes 2:10).

"A person convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still." It's an old saying, and true. Who is capable of forcing another into believing anything? We, each of us, have the sole responsibility, to the best of our ability, to prove from the Bible what is truth and what is fiction.

The Lord is aware of those who are His and anyone who presumes to name the name of the Lord must be actively departing from evil (2Tim 2:19). Those who think the commandments, including the Sabbath day are not in effect are trespassing against the Father. "If you continue in my word", says God, "you are my disciples and shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). 

# Attend the Feast this Year!

Many Sabbath-keeping groups are sponsoring Feasts this year. See the end of the article for explanation of the group codes (e.g. "UCG," "NonAlign").

Each entry gives either the meeting place (hall) location or the name of a person that can supply information. Some housing information is included, but you can obtain more by dialing information at 1-[area code]-555-1212 and asking for the number of the city's chamber of

commerce, tourist bureau, travel agent, etc. If no area code is listed, use the one from the first phone number.

Festival dates are September 27 (at evening) to October 5 (Last Great Day) unless otherwise noted (some groups use a different calendar).

If you know of other Feast sites not listed here, please write *Servants' News* or contact Norman Brumm at 918-470-8111.

- 
- USA & Canada: North West**
- Redding, Calif. **UCG**  
Redding Convention Center, 700 Auditorium Dr. Area code 916.
- Sis-Q-Meadows, Ore. **NonAlign**  
Focus on Christianity's Hebrew Roots. Cabins or camping with all meals provided: \$25.00/day for single, discounts for families. John Beattie, PO Box 1472, rogue River, OR 97537, 541-855-7220.
- Sun River, Oregon **NonAlign**  
Al Murrey, 210 NW 14th, Pendleton, OR 97801, 541-276-1400.
- Victoria, B.C. **NonAlign**  
Fred McGovarin, RR 2, Hastings, Ontario K0L 1Y0, 705-696-3111. E-mail: fredmcgovarin@oncomdis.on.com. **Note corrections: this site was previously listed incorrectly as an "open" site in "Vancouver" and the e-mail address was wrong.**
- Vernon, British Columbia **GCG**  
Best Western Lodge, 3914 32nd St., 801-545-3385, 800-663-4422.
- Whistler, British Columbia **UCG**  
Whistler Conference Centre, 4010 Whistler Way. Area code 604.
- USA: South West**
- Arcadia, California **Open**  
Info: Bernard Kelley, 818-446-5211. Hall & rooms: The Santa Anita Inn, 800-854-1629.
- Kauai, Hawaii **UCG**  
Kauai War Memorial Coliseum. Kauai Vacation Rentals, 808-245-8841, 800-367-5025. Plantation Hale, 800-775-4253.
- Kings Beach (Lake Tahoe), Calif. **CGI**  
North Tahoe Conference Center housing info: 800-824-6348. Area code 702.
- Lake Tahoe, Calif. **NonAlign**  
Sept 26 to Oct 5—two calendar systems will be accommodated. Norman Brumm, 510 Gillespie St, Locust Grove, OK 74352 918-479-8111. Area code 702.
- Park City, Utah **GCG**  
The Inn at Prospector Square, 2200 Sidewinder Dr., 801-649-7100.
- Tucson, Arizona **UCG**  
Tucson Convention Center, 260 S. Church. Area code 520.
- Twain Harte, Calif. **CBCG**  
Video site. Jan Ewing: 209-586-3008.
- Ventura, Calif. **GCG**  
Holiday Inn Ventura Beach Resort, 450 East Harbor Blvd., 805-648-7731.
- USA: North Central**
- Green Bay, Wis. **Open**  
Sept 29 to Oct 6. John Purvins: PO Box 1, Little Chute, WI 54140, 414-733-5271, 414-788-2939.
- Rapid City, South Dakota **Open**  
Greg Lanager, 2801 Willow Ave, Rapid City, SD 57501. Area code 605.
- Wisconsin Dells, Wis. **UCG**  
Crystal Grand Music Theater, Route 23. Area Code 608.
- USA: South Central**
- Branson, Missouri **Open**  
Sept 26-Oct 5. Info: James Russell, PO Box 2109, Corona, CA 91718, 903-737-0559. Hall & rooms: Tree House Condos (Phyllis) 800-328-5199. Area code 417.
- Branson, Missouri **UCG**  
Will Rogers Theater, junction of US 65 and State Route 248. Area code 417. No service on first Friday night.
- Colorado Springs, Colo. **Open**  
Sept 28 to Oct 6. Jack Hines, PO Box 9901, Colorado Springs, Co 80932, 719-637-1140.
- Colorado Springs, Colo. **Open**  
Jeff Booth, 806-352-8739. Area code 719.
- Corpus Christi, Texas **UCG**  
Bayfront Plaza Convention Center, 1901 N. Shoreline Dr. Area code 512.
- Grand Lake of the Cherokees, Oklahoma **TCG**  
Info: Bill Fowler, 316-945-7773. Shangrila, 1-800-331-4060. Area code 918.
- Grand Lake of the Cherokees, Oklahoma **NonAlign**  
Hall & rooms: Martin Landing, 918-257-4265. Info: Norman S. Edwards, 501-872-1003.
- Kerrville, Texas **GCG**  
Holiday Inn Y.O. Ranch Hotel, 2033 Sidney Baker (street), 210-257-4440.
- Keystone, Colo. **UCG**  
Hall & rooms: Keystone Conference Center, 800-258-0437. Area Code 970.
- Lake of the Ozarks, Mo. **GCG**  
Marriott's Tan-Tar-A Resort, Hwy KK, Osage Beach, Mo., 314-348-3131.
- Palisade, Colo. **CBCG**  
Dwight Blevins, 970-243-4859; Bob Cooper 970-225-2937, 970-568-9135.
- San Antonio, Texas **Open**  
Sept 26 to Oct 4. Ted Phillips, PO Box 2735, Corona, Calif. 91718, 909-280-9046. Area code 210
- San Antonio, Texas **Open**  
Church of the Great God, PO Box 471846, Charlotte, NC 28247, 800-878-8220. Area code 210.
- Wagoner, Okla. **CGI**  
Western Hills Guest Ranch: 918-772-2545.
- USA & Canada: North East**
- Collingwood, Ontario **TCG**  
Desmond Burke, 604-494-8484.
- Hull, Quebec **UCG**  
Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, 2 Montcalm St. 819-778-3880, 800-567-1962. Services in English with French translation.
- Lexington, Ky. **UCG**  
Heritage Arena, corner of Broadway and Main. Area Code 606.
- Niagara Falls, Ontario **GCG**  
The Ameri-Cana Resort, 8444 Lundy's Lane, 905-356-8444, 800-263-3508.
- The Poconos, Penn. **UCG**  
Resort at Split Rock, Exhibition Complex, Lake Harmony, Penn. Area code 717.
- Quebec (French-speaking). **GCG**  
Contact GCG headquarters.
- Snowshoe, West Virginia **NonAlign**  
Jim Rector, 3802 Olive Street, Texarkana, TX 75503, 903-792-1352. Area code 304.
- USA: South East**
- Clearwater, Florida **GCG**  
Harborview Center, 300 Cleveland St. Area code 813.
- Daytona Beach, Florida **TCG**

**SERVANTS' NEWS**

Manuel Rojas: 904-673-8324.  
**Destin, Florida TCG**  
 Info: Darryll Watson, 904-581-2820.  
 Realtor: 800-336-4853, Shoreline  
 Towers: 800-874-0162.  
**Destin, Florida NonAlign**  
 Sept 11-18. Info: Ken Tate, 501-426-5261.  
**Gatlinburg, Tenn. Open**  
 UCG Birmingham, PO Box 361334,  
 Birmingham, Ala. 35236, 205-444-5049.  
 Area code 615.  
**Hilton Head, South Carolina TCG**  
 Rooms: 803-842-4402, mention "Church  
 of God." Info: David Nix, 540-786-6315.  
**Jekyll Island, Georgia UCG**  
 Hartley Auditorium, 1 Beachview Dr.  
 Area code 912.  
**Kissimmee, Fla (Orlando) Open**  
 Ronald Dart, PO Box 560, Whitehouse,  
 TX 75791, 903-509-2999. Local Visitor's  
 Bureau: 800-333-5477. Area code 407.  
**Kissimmee, Fla (Orlando) UCG**  
 Tupperware Center, 14901 S. Orange  
 Blossom Trail. Local Visitor's Bureau:  
 800-333-5477. Area code 407.  
**Land-Between-The-Lakes, Ky. CGI**  
 Kentucky Dam Village State Park: 800-  
 325-0146. Ramada Inn: 800-628-6538.  
 Area code 502.  
**Panama City, Florida NonAlign**  
 David Owen, 4213 Owen Rd, Dalton, GA  
 39729, 706-277-3433. Area code 904.  
**Panama City Beach, Fla. NonAlign**  
 Charles Kimbrough, PO Box 547,  
 Crystal River, FL 34423, 352-382-0877.  
**Panama City Beach, Fla. CGI**  
 Edgewater Beach Resort: 800-874-  
 8686. Written housing information: 800-  
 722-3224. Housing referrals: 904-234-  
 3193. Area code 904.  
**Pensacola Beach, Fla. CBCG**  
 Beachside Resort and Conference  
 Center: 800-232-2416. Info: Glenn  
 Daniel: 904-968-5561 or 904-937-0260.  
**Rogerville, Ala. CBCG**  
 Low budget camping site, video ser-  
 mons. Info: Lynn Dailey, 423-334-9111.

INTERNATIONAL:

**Australia: West**  
**Bunbury, WA GCG**  
 Ken MacLeod, 61-9-457-7624.  
**Australia: East**  
 (to be announced) **GCG**  
 Bruce Tyler, 61-6-231-8166.  
**Lorne, VIC UCG**  
 Rod King, 61-3-9725-8768.  
**Nelson Bay, NSW UCG**  
 Bruce Dean, 61-42-62-1427.  
**Noosa Heads, QLD UCG**

Graemme J Marshall, 61-7-3807-6087.  
**Barbados UCG**  
 Call Arnold Hampton, 410-655-6265.  
**Belgium, Hengelhof GCG**  
 Rees Ellis, 32-71-218-190.  
**Cameroon UCG**  
 (planning in progress)  
**Chile, Maitencillo UCG**  
 Mario Seiglie, 56-2-555-2004.  
**Columbia UCG**  
 (planning in progress)  
**Germany, Winterberg UCG**  
 Winifried Fritz, 49-2208-73132.  
**Guatemala, Quetzaltenango UCG**  
 Saul Langarica, 502-2-56-71-92.  
**Guyana, Georgetown GCG**  
 Wesley Webster, 301-390-1122  
**Italy, Tuscany UCG**  
 Carmelo Anastasi, 39-35-583474.  
**Jamaica CGI**  
 (contact headquarters)  
**Jordan UCG**  
 (planning in progress)  
**Malaysia, Penang GCG**  
 Rajan Moses, 60-3-930-1187  
**Mexico UCG**  
 (planning in progress)  
**The Netherlands, Hoogeveen UCG**  
 Bram de Bree, 31-346-572280  
**New Zealand GCG**  
 (contact headquarters)  
**Norway, Sundvollen UCG**  
 Peter Shenton, 44-01905-351389.  
**Peru UCG**  
 (planning in progress)  
**The Philippines GCG**  
 Bagio City  
 Bob League, 63-2-633-5735  
 (contact headquarters) **GCG**  
 (planning in progress) **UCG**  
**South Africa GCG**  
 George  
 Syd J. Hull, 27-11-664-6036.  
**Uvongo UCG**  
 Andre Van Belkum, PO Box 1453,  
 Westville 3630, South Africa.  
**Tobago, Crown Point GCG**  
 Wesley Webster, 301-390-1122  
**Tonga UCG**  
 (planning in progress)  
**United Kingdom UCG**  
 Weymouth, Dorset, (Southern  
 England)  
 United Church of God, PO Box 5929,  
 Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 6YX.  
**York (Northeastern England) UCG**  
 John A. Jewell, 44-1257-450829.  
**Filey. (contact headquarters) CGI**  
**Zimbabwe UCG**  
 (planning in progress)

KEY TO CODES:

**NonAlign** (non-aligned) sites are cooperative efforts between multiple groups. They usually accept speakers from multiple groups and/or allow questions during the meetings. The person or group sponsoring the Feast is responsible for the smooth operation of the site, but is not responsible for approving every detail of the messages presented.

**Open** sites allow brethren to attend and make their own reservations without asking them a lot of questions. Their schedule of speakers is usually limited to their own organization and they may not allow any questions during services.

ORGANIZATION CODES:

Organizations not listed as "open," below, may have some type of approval process for people attending their Feasts. This process usually varies greatly depending on the organization and the person that talks to you. Some simply want to collect registration information, others ask all kinds of questions. The non-open organizations are primarily trying to prevent people from coming to the Feast to pass out literature and/or discuss ideas that differ from the organization's teaching. They are more than happy to have people attend who are coming to enjoy the feast, listen to their messages, and participate in the offerings.

**CBCG.** The Christian Biblical Church of God operates "open" sites. PO Box 1442, Hollister, CA 95024, 408-637-1875.

**CGI.** The Church of God, International, operates essentially "open" sites, but people attending should be aware of the difficulties with the leadership there (see Feb & Mar-April *Servants' News*).

**GCG.** Global Church of God, PO Box 501111, San Diego, CA 92150, 800-959-1642, 619-675-2222.

**TCG.** The Churches of God operate "open" sites. RR2 Box 114, Hawkins, TX 75765, 800-611-8080.

**UCG.** United Church of God, An International Association. PO Box 661780, Arcadia, CA 91066, 818-294-0800.

Plan to learn, fellowship, and serve at the Feast this year. "And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:33). 

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many people as want it at the lowest practical cost. This loose-leaf format is inexpensive and allows this non-copyrighted publication to be easily copied. You might wish to bind it with a 3-ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

## Literature List

All items are free. New items are highlighted with shading. All back issues of *Servants' News* are available upon request.

### Mature Literature

- 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 S. 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. Lessons for today from Revelation 2-3 including the oppressive doctrine of the Nicolaitans and the doctrine of Balaam.
- Basic Bible Study Tools** by Richard Nickels. 36 pages. An excellent summary of available Bible study aids and how to use them. Samples of many study aids included.
- Biblical Calendar Basics** by Norman S. Edwards, 10 pages. Introduction to the issues about the Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)
- By What Authority?** by John A. Diffley, 16 pages. A brief overview of authority and its structure in the New Testament churches.
- Does the New Covenant Do Away with the Letter of the Law?** by Eric V. Snow. 42 pages—revised Jan. 1996. A "must read" for those who feel it does.
- Did Christ Reorganize the Church?** by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1939, 8 pages. Very different than his later approach: Christ never set up a hierarchical government.
- 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 S. 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.
- Just What Does the New Covenant Do?** by Joseph Chunko, 18 pages. Explanation of the difference between the law, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.
- The Letter to the Galatians, a Paraphrase with Built-in Commentary** by John McCauley. 18 pages. Lively vernacular paraphrase with some notes on book of Galatians.
- Where Is the True Church Today?** by Jack M. Lane, 18 pages. How can there be so many similar groups, yet one true church? What is required of members? Read and see.

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

### Basic Literature

- The Bible Sabbath: Seventh Day or First Day?** (From the Bible Sabbath Association) 2 pages. Basic Sabbath tract.
- God's Purpose for Your Life** by Fred McGovarin, 40 pages, half-size booklet. A "first booklet" for people just becoming interested in the Truth. It introduces Hebrew names (Yahweh and Yashua) for God and Jesus.
- The Key to the Book of Revelation** edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 12-page 9"x4" booklet.
- The Resurrection of Christ—Is It a Fact?** by Don Hudgel. 2 page tract for those skeptical of the Bible & resurrection.
- Why Do You Observe Sunday?** edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.

### Study Resources and Information

- Barnabas Ministries Mission Statement** by Alan Ruth. 2 pages.
- Bible Sabbath Association Order Form.** 1 page. Sabbath books & tracts, Sabbath Sentinel Magazine.
- The Christian Beacon** Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter "for the shared ministry of the Royal Priesthood."
- A Church of God Ministry Order Form** by Lon Lacey & friends. 1 page. Free literature on nature of God & Satan, Biblical law, prophecy, history, church government, etc.
- Commonwealth Publishing Order Form** by Kirk Gearhart. 4 pages. Religious books, including Darrell W. Condor's.
- Giving and Sharing Order Form** by Richard Nickels. 3 pages. Has many excellent free items, low prices on hard-to-find religious books, and fine literature on floppy disk.
- Hebrew Roots** Sample 24-page issue of free newsletter with emphasis on the Hebrew roots of "Christian" belief.
- History Research Projects Order Form** by Craig White. 6 pages. Hard-to-find books on the origins of nations.
- The Modern Church, Divine Institution or Counterfeit** by Peter Kershaw. 24 page booklet. We do not agree with all of it, but it has good legal info on unincorporated churches.
- In Transition** One free sample issue of 16 page newspaper. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups.
- The Sabbath Sentinel** One free sample issue of 16 page glossy magazine—doctrinal & human interest articles. With Bible Sabbath Association order form: Sabbath books & tracts.
- Servants' News & Norman Edwards Statement of Receipts and Expenses**, 2 pages. (Always sent to contributors.)
- The WAY** Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter of doctrinal articles relating to the Biblical way of life.

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