

# Servants' NEWS

Vol. 7, No. 6 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be Nov/Dec 2001

## “Christ... Leaving Us an Example”

by Norman Edwards

**T**he most important part of Christ's earthly ministry was dying for our sins. The Apostle Paul said so:

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1Cor 15:3).

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Rom 5:10).

Christ and the Father demonstrated their love for us in this (Rom 5:8). It certainly was a wonderful thing. This message has been preached many places by a great many Christian denominations, and is very good. Unfortunately, this message has often been mixed with doctrinal error, but then, God often makes sure that those who seek more truth about Him find it (Deut 4:29; Jer 29:13).

But is there any more we should learn from the death and resurrection of Christ than His great love and His sacrifice for sins? Would it have worked equally well for the Messiah to have lived on a deserted island and to have been killed by a wandering thief who killed Him in His sleep to steal His stash of coconuts?

Absolutely not!

Dear Norman:  
I am looking for a church that has Jesus Christ as their main focus. They would have to keep the seventh day Sabbath, observe all the Holy Days. All of the Churches of God that I am aware of do not have Jesus Christ as their main focus. They believe that if you are keeping the Sabbath, the Holy Days and are tithing, you're a Christian in good standing and that's all you have to do. They bring up Jesus in their messages around the Feast of Unleavened Bread and that's about it. Surely there must be a Church somewhere that believes first in our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ as their main belief. I would appreciate a response.  
Thanks, — David C. McCarble, Texas

Dear David,  
I am looking for a church like that too! It seems that many groups emphasize a few things that they do well, and act as if the rest is not important. Maybe Christ wants all of us to share what we know and work together to serve Him. I hope these articles can be a start.

— Norman Edwards

Jesus made it very clear that it was of His own choosing that he “laid down His life” for us (John 10:11–18). “**No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.** I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father” (John 10:18). Christ voluntarily lived a life of service and teaching which ultimately resulted in His death. He learned from that life:

*Continued on page 15*

## Baptism & Passover: Two Pictures of Our Need for Christ

by Jerry Laws

**F**rom time to time my thoughts keep coming back to the process of salvation. The more I think about it, the broader and deeper it gets. In this ever-expanding process I'm being made more keenly aware that there is “nothing but Christ!” What I mean by this is that in the Father's purity, He only views His beloved Son.

And by the Father's grace (ability) we believers have been placed or positioned “in Christ” (1Cor 1:30) whether we are actively aware of it or not.

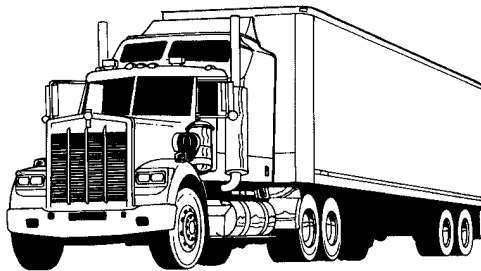
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# Truckers Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo.  
#88-90



*The Trucker's Bible Study is conducted weekly at the Texaco truck stop on I-70, Oak Grove, Missouri, by Arlo Gieselman, often assisted by Lenny Cacchio, the writer of this series*

## November 4, 2001

We had a great time this morning at the truck stop. We had four drivers, our regular guest Matt, and I brought a friend from Lee's Summit.

My plans today were to do a study of the Sabbath beginning in Genesis, but instead we had a study on a few of the Holy Days beginning in Genesis. We started with the sin of Adam and Eve, and Matt mentioned that when God told them that they would die if they ate from the tree, they probably didn't know what He meant because they had never seen death before this. This led to a discussion about God clothing them with skins, which would have meant the death of an innocent animal (and the shedding of blood), which would have been a precursor of the sacrifice of the innocent Lamb of God.

This led to Exodus 12 and the Passover, and the parallels between that and the accounts of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the Gospels.

We then talked about the differences between the Old and New Covenants, and I was pleased that they could see that the problem with the Old Covenant was not the covenant but the people, who were unable to live by it. This led to a discussion of Pentecost and the likelihood that the Old Covenant was made with Israel at about that time, and how the New Covenant was ratified by the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. It is that Holy Spirit which writes the law in our hearts, as indicated in Hebrews 8.

So we had our basis for discussion, and I was pleased to see the depth of Bible understanding that they had.

One item that struck me earlier this week was a broadcast of

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In addition to the normal printed copy edition which can be received in the normal post, you can also receive *Servants' News* by e-mail in Portable Document Format (PDF), which can be read using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader ([www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)), which looks the same as the printed copy.

You can also receive an e-mail notification for when the latest issue is available on the website ([www.servantsnews.com](http://www.servantsnews.com)). Thus the four options are:

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2. snail mail and link to website by e-mail;
3. link to website sent by e-mail;
4. PDF file sent by e-mail.

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# Servants' NEWS

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The purpose of Church Bible Teaching Ministry is to continue the work of the Church that was started by Jesus Christ (Yeshua the Messiah) and His Apostles in the first century. This work involves expounding the truth of the Bible by means of preaching, teaching, writing and music as well as taking positive action to help and serve other believers and all people of the world. CBTM and those people who work within it are just a few of many parts of the Church, which is the body of Christ. *Servants' News* is a publication of CBTM.

The gospel should be given freely—you may copy this newsletter and give it to others. CBTM has nothing to sell, but is supported by free-will offerings of individuals. We do not have IRS 501(c)(3) status, but Churches are tax exempt without this status (see IRS Publ. 557, Nov 1999 ed., p. 15). Please make offerings to *Church Bible Teaching Ministry*.

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**Notice:** *The people listed above do not necessarily endorse every item in this newsletter.*

New articles and corrections to previous articles will be considered for printing. We do not return writings sent to us, so please make copies of anything you need to keep. Send to:

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# News from Local Congregations



This column includes information sent to us from a variety of groups. Servants' News does not necessarily agree with the teachings or practices of these groups. Please ask about them before attending their functions.

## Detroit Area Special Speakers

You are invited to hear two Sabbath messages on Saturday May 18, 2002 at the Unity East Church, 23057 Nunneley, Clinton Township, MI 48036. **Jeff and Sharon Ledy** will speak on *Conflict Resolution* from 12 noon to 1:30 pm, followed by a potluck meal, then *Love Languages* from 3:00 to 4:30 pm. Take I-94 north out of Detroit; at exit 236 go west on Metro Parkway, cross Harper Ave then look for Unity East Church on the north side; pass it, turning right onto N. Nunneley.

The Ledys have presented these and other messages at Feasts and seminar weekends. The topics are from their marriage seminar, but are helpful to people of all ages, married or single. I think most brethren would find them very edifying. The Ledys and my family both attend the Church of God Fellowship in Haslett, Michigan. Contact Allen Turner at 586-463-3856 or Jeff Ledy at 517-625-6383.

— Norman Edwards

## Michigan Feast Site

I have found several good places for a Feast of Tabernacles 2002 site, and will be choosing one shortly. I am interested in sites similar to the Chadron State Park site we used last year (see Sept/Oct 2001 issue). It had a place with a central meeting/dining hall where we did our own cooking and a variety of accommodations, from motels to cabins to camping. I will provide information in the next issue

— Norman Edwards

## Send Info on Other Feast Sites

If you have not already done so, please send information on other Feast of

Tabernacles sites that welcome non-aligned believers. We are especially interested in sites held with calendars other than the Jewish Calendar. Many calendars are a whole month different than the Jewish Calendar this year and so it does not work to attend with another group that is only a day off. Even if just a few families gathering, please send Feast information: **location, dates, contact information, and a few sentence description of what this site is like** (traditional CoG sermonette and sermons, completely interactive, shared meals, use sacred names, planned activities, etc.). While we understand and appreciate long messages about the greatness of God's Feasts and the beauty of various places He has created, we do not have room to include them all. Send detailed literature like this to those who contact you.

— Norman Edwards

## Scripture Songs on CD

*Think On These Things*, a professionally produced CD and audio cassette with 16 inspirational songs by poet Barri Armitage, includes several songs which focus on the Spring Holy Days: *Oh, Lord, You Have Searched Me*, *Healed By His Stripes*, *Bought With a Price*, *Song of Moses*, and songs adapted from Psalms 113 and 116, traditional psalms for those days. Barri has poetically adapted scriptures and set them to folk melodies.

*Servants' News* provides free copies of Sheet Music to this album. To obtain the CD, send check or M.O. to: Barri Armitage, 13904 N. Gate Dr., Silver Spring, MD 20906. Prices (which include S&H): \$16.00/CD; \$12/cassette; \$8.00/song sheet set; \$10.00/CD or cassette with piano only. International orders, add \$1.00.

Maryland residents add sales tax of \$0.68/CD, \$0.50/cassette, \$0.30/ song sheet set, and \$0.40/ "piano only" CD or cassette. For shipping discounts on orders of 2 or more, or if someone cannot afford the full price, contact Barri at the address above or e-mail: [barri@dovesongs.com](mailto:barri@dovesongs.com). Any profits will go toward producing her next CD, *Comfort You My People*. For details about the performers and to hear song samples, visit [www.dovesongs.com](http://www.dovesongs.com).

— Barri Armitage

## Ray Wooten to Speak at Sabbath Campers Fellowship

Ray Wooten will be speaking at the Sabbath Campers Fellowship weekend, August 23–25. at Shady Green Pastures, near Charlotte, Michigan. A Bible study will be held Friday night. The Sabbath schedule is: 11:00 a.m. singing, noon services, and a 3:00 p.m. potluck meal. Saturday evening, there will be a concert by *The Northmen*, a Gospel quartet from Indiana, at 7:00 p.m. Recreational activities are planned for Sunday. More details will be provided in future issues. If you would like to help or need more information now, contact:

— Kelli Brophy  
[Kellibrophy@yahoo.com](mailto:Kellibrophy@yahoo.com)

## New Service in Detroit Area

A new Church of God fellowship has been formed and is now meeting weekly on Friday evenings at 7:30 p.m. All in the greater Metro Detroit area are invited to attend. Please contact us at: **Messianic Church of God**, P.O. Box 214036, Auburn Hills, MI 48321. Our email address is [messiahcog@hotmail.com](mailto:messiahcog@hotmail.com). Our website address is: [mcog.israelite.info](http://mcog.israelite.info). Phone: 248-853-6675. We would great-

ly appreciate any service you can be to us by spreading the word. Thank you!

— Don Frith and Jory Brooks

## Ernest Martin Dies at 69

Dr. Ernest Martin, 69, died in his Portland, Oregon home, January 16, 2002. He is survived by his wife, Ramona, one son and two daughters. He suffered a heart attack while working at his computer—having largely recovered from a heart attack on January 4th.

He graduated from Ambassador College in 1958, received an M.A. in 1962 and a Ph.D. in 1966. From 1960 to 1972, he was Senior Professor of History and Theology at the Brickett Wood campus. He also served as Dean of Faculty and secured an alliance with Hebrew University in Israel to bring students to help with archeological digs. Dr. Martin's style did not fit in well with the growing centralized control in the WCG. His desire to study deeply and to write whatever conclusions were produced by his analysis of the facts caused him to split off from the WCG in 1974.

After leaving the WCG, he started the Foundation for Biblical Research and the the Associates for Scriptural Knowledge (A.S.K.) in 1985. During this time he authored 10 books, 200 booklets and 200 taped lectures. His ministry was different from the typical WCG splinter-group ministry in that it did not claim to be "the one church" and most of those served were not former members of the WCG. Furthermore, Dr. Martin interacted with mainstream Bible scholars and some actually respected his work. I have seen him interviewed on network TV for a couple of biblical documentaries. The premise of his book, *The Star that Astonished the World*, was accepted by numerous planetariums throughout the world and used as the explanation of the star seen by the "Magi" that came to the birth of Christ. (You can see an animated presentation of this at the A.S.K. website: [www.askelm.com](http://www.askelm.com).)

Martin also did extensive research on the original location of the temples in Jerusalem. He was convinced that neither temple was located on the site of the Dome of the Rock mosque, but south of the so-called Temple Mount and Western Wall, in the city of David

over the Gihon Springs. If his research is accepted by the rabbis currently hoping to build a temple, it may be possible to do what many have formerly considered impossible—build a Jewish Temple without destroying the Dome of the Rock.

Dr. Martin was also the fundamental inspiration for "the Original Bible Project", in the process of completion by James Tabor.

I have only read part of Ernest Martin's work, and have disagreed with some of his conclusions—he appeared to believe in universal salvation and did not observe the Sabbath and other laws the way that I do. But nor did he accept the false doctrines of mainstream Christianity. Nevertheless, I think he set a fine example in methodology. He gave reasons for his conclusions and was usually willing to discuss opposing points of view. He recognized and appreciated the work of many others, even though they disagreed with him. While being widely read and seeming to have an opinion on most Biblical subjects, he did not have to have "the limelight". I remember he graciously accepted my talking through most of his time slot in a 3-man presentation on the Biblical calendar that I shared with him. I asked him if he wanted me to stop, but he said "keep going" and spoke for only a few minutes at the end. (He did agree with my conclusion and I think was rather amused by my rather youthful presentation at the time.)

The death of this diligent Bible student ought to give Church of God brethren a moment to think about the past and the future. Most of Dr. Martin's books are still available at Amazon.com, though some are out of print—only used books for sale. There are no books written against him. Whereas, of 20 books listed under "Herbert W Armstrong", only one actually written *by him* is still in print—a republication of his early writings edited by Richard Nickels. Used copies of eight of his out-of-print books are there. And then there are 11 books about him—eight of which are against him! As some of our older Sabbatarian leaders and teachers finish their time in this life, we must think about what we will leave behind and where our new leaders will come from. Remember, excellent

works like Adam Clarke's commentary are still in use 175 years later.

I believe Dr. Martin was blessed by our Father in that he spent no great amount of time suffering, but spent all but a few days of his life studying and teaching—the things he liked to do best. May God bless us with more men with a similar desire to study and teach.

— Norman Edwards

## Original Bible Project

Previous issues of *Servants' News* have indicated that the Original Bible Project was scheduled to be complete in the year 2000, but it has been delayed a couple of years in an effort to keep its accuracy and consistency at the highest possible level. The Original Bible Project is largely the work of James Tabor and is an effort to produce a translation with an accurate meaning within the known historical and linguistic context, avoiding traditional religious interpretations.

Consistency is not an easy task in Bible translation. When different members of a translation team work on different sections of the Bible, it is quite easy for some words to be translated differently by each team. Even the well-respected King James Version has this problem. For example, the Hebrew *moed* means "appointed times" and is most often used to refer to God's appointed times, the Sabbath and Holy Days. Yet the KJV translates it as: "congregation, feast, season, appointed, time, assembly, solemnity, solemn, days, sign, synagogues". When *moed* is translated "congregation" it is almost always in the phrase "tabernacle of the congregation", which would be better translated "tabernacle of meetings" or "tabernacle of appointed times" or "tabernacle of Feasts". The other greatly varying translations obscure the importance of God's appointed times, making it very difficult for a person to study the Feasts in the Bible with only an English language concordance. This is just one of many difficult situations a translator faces.

Dr. Robert Haak of Augustana College has been hired to edit the entire Old Testament. Arrangements to find an editor for the New Testament are being made. Both Dr. Haak and Dr. Tabor

have arranged for Sabbaticals from their universities for the fall of 2002, so the entire Old Testament should be available near the end of 2002.

I have sample pages of this Bible and I think most Bible students will find it very helpful. While I do not feel that this is a translation that will make all other translations obsolete, it is certainly one worth reading all the way through, and I am sure that I will frequently check it when studying Scripture. You can contact the Original Bible Project at 408 South Pasadena Ave Suite 1; Pasadena, California 91105; 626-799-2000; website: [www.centuryone.org/obp.html](http://www.centuryone.org/obp.html).

— Norman Edwards

### Forum Un-Recommended

I mentioned the Fellowship Forum ([www.boards2go.com/boards/board.cgi?userKevinWelch](http://www.boards2go.com/boards/board.cgi?userKevinWelch)) in the July/Aug issue (p 5). It appears to have largely changed into a forum trying to figure out what, if any, of the New Testament is true. I do not recommend it at this time. I have posted a message on this forum explaining more about my reasons.

— Norman Edwards

### Sabbath Conference 2002

This *Proclaiming the Sabbath More Fully* conference will be held Pentecost weekend, at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, V. E. Garber Auditorium in Chan Shun Hall, May 17-19, 2002. Presenters include: **Peter Sander**, Schaumburg, IL *Ha'dlakat Ha'nerot and Kidush (Friday-evening candle lighting service), Havdalah and Nerot b'Shavuot (end of Sabbath service when followed by a holy day)*; **Samuele Bacchiocchi**, Berrien Springs, Michigan ([sbacchiocchi@qtm.net](mailto:sbacchiocchi@qtm.net)) *The Sabbath and the Savior*; **Richard Washington**, Inkster, Michigan, *He Shall Think to Change*; **Michael Horton**, Chicago, Illinois ([LETHOR510@aol.com](mailto:LETHOR510@aol.com)) *Christ as Liberator in the Feasts: Worship Renewal*; **Sidney L. Davis, Jr.**, ND North Chicago, Illinois ([sabbathmorefully@aol.com](mailto:sabbathmorefully@aol.com)), *The Law in Galatians - an examination of the 1888 message and its impact on the SDA theology of the la.*; **Tom Stapleton**, B.C., Canada ([staelectric@uniserve.com](mailto:staelectric@uniserve.com)), *"The*

*Daily" of Daniel 8, How "the daily" and the prophetic time periods of Daniel relate to the festal calendar*; **John Merritt**, MD Oconomowoc, Wisconsin ([YHN26@aol.com](mailto:YHN26@aol.com)), *There is no such thing as The Old Covenant, or The New Covenant*; **Merwin Abbott**, Norman, Arkansas ([sabbathmorefully@earthlink.net](mailto:sabbathmorefully@earthlink.net)) *Appointed Time After the Nailing*; **David Schwingel**, Chicago, Illinois ([Ulaiver@aol.com](mailto:Ulaiver@aol.com)), *Opening the Seals—a Day of Two Earthquakes*.

—M. Basner, 918-521-1414; e-mail: [sabbathmorefully@yahoo.com](mailto:sabbathmorefully@yahoo.com), [www.andrews.edu/services/sabbathconference/2002/](http://www.andrews.edu/services/sabbathconference/2002/) Registration Information: [www.andrews.edu/services/sabbathconference/2002/registration.php3](http://www.andrews.edu/services/sabbathconference/2002/registration.php3)

### Edwards Winter Trip

These are highlights of the Edwards' family 2-week winter trip:

Friday night, Dec 21 was spent at the home of Brian & Samantha Hoeck near Chicago. We attended the afternoon Sabbath service there which was held in a library conference room and included some out-of-town guests. We enjoyed the interactive study conducted by Don Reed. Then I spoke about starting a local congregation. Many said that it helped them understand how to better work together.

We then traveled to Colorado and spent a few days with Matt and Robin Laws and family, then Leo and Anna Bredehoft and family. Friday, the 28th, we rehearsed music for the Sabbath, and then spent the evening with Howard and Theresa Naasz in Littleton (a southern suburb of Denver). The newspaper announcement for the *Starting a Local Congregation* seminar was properly submitted, but was not printed by the Denver papers. I had prayed that non-CoG people would come only if it were God's will for them to do so. While I believe that Church of God groups must learn to reach out to others, it is more difficult to structure a message to be helpful to both groups. As it was, over 50 former CoG people attended and we were able to cover a lot of ground in regard to starting a local congregation. Many helpful comments and questions were raised by the brethren in attendance. I learned a lot from this meeting and hope to write

more about forming congregations in the future. Several people remarked that it gave them a better understanding of how brethren from diverse backgrounds can function together. Many of those attending went to a restaurant for dinner after the Sabbath.

Sunday morning, December 30, we went south from Denver and saw the Royal Gorge. It is a canyon that is over 1,000 feet deep but only a few hundred feet wide at the top. It is an excellent demonstration of the erroneous evolutionary thinking for most modern geologists. The website says (at [www.royalgorgebridge.com/history.htm](http://www.royalgorgebridge.com/history.htm)): "It is estimated that the Royal Gorge was THREE MILLION YEARS in the making. The Arkansas River (at 1,400 miles, one of the longest rivers in America) has cut its channel more than a thousand feet deep through the granite at the estimated average of one foot every 2,500 years."

What is wrong with that? It was evident to me that there has been wind and rain erosion of the sides of the canyon at a rate much faster than one foot every 2,500 years. It seems that over a foot of rock and dirt had eroded away from some of the man-made structures that are less than 100 years old. One could see places in the bottom of the gorge where piles of rubble sat that had fallen from the sides. Obviously, I could not take accurate measurements in one visit, nor could I find any data on the Internet, but if the sides are eroding at an average of one foot every hundred years (or even one foot every thousand years), and the bottom at only one foot every 2,500 years, then the canyon would be wider than it is deep. But it is not! The 1,000-foot depth and only few-hundred-foot width clearly show that at some time in the past this canyon must have been cut very quickly! Water receding from a great flood would do just such a thing.

We went to Dallas/Fort Worth on Monday the 31st. We met with my cousin who explained about a non-denominational service organization in which he was involved. I may write more about it in the future. We also visited my wife's family. We went to the Fayetteville Arkansas area where I visited my parents and also spent an hour

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# Literature Mailed During Past Seven Years

The following two-page chart shows total literature items we sent during the last seven years. It does not include the approximately 100,000 issues of *Servants' News* issues mass-mailed as a part of the regular circulation, or the more than 10,000 literature items included with those issues. It does not include a few thousand items given away at Feast and conference displays. The number of ultimate readers is unknown since these items are easy to copy and many people do so.

Almost all literature was specifically requested by our readers, the major exception being the initial package sent to readers where we frequently include popular literature like *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?*

The “\*\*\*” line, below, contains the combined totals for over a hundred low-volume items of which we shipped less than 24 in every year. The 15,000+ back issues we mailed were also combined into one line, otherwise they would take about 60 lines. You may request this literature (except personal and “discontinued” items”) by its title or “Order Code”.

| TOTAL | 1995 | 1996  | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | ORDER CODE | LITERATURE NAME  |
|-------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|--|
| 41429 | 3178 | 10684 | 8540 | 5854 | 5043 | 4400 | 3730 |            | <i>(grand totals of everything shown below)</i>  |
| 15241 | 1544 | 4937  | 3223 | 1950 | 1648 | 1087 | 852  |            | <i>(combined Servants' News back issues mailed separately)</i>   |
| 3496  | 374  | 1420  | 914  | 480  | 190  | 94   | 24   |            | <i>(combined literature items we have discontinued)</i>  |
| 1742  | 320  | 734   | 236  | 147  | 116  | 124  | 65   | GOVHUM     | How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?  |
| 1443  |      |       | 279  | 406  | 342  | 236  | 180  | LITLST     | Servants' News Complete Literature List  |
| 1190  |      |       | 317  | 306  | 314  | 107  | 146  | CARDSN     | Card asking for signature for 2nd class mail for SN  |
| 1188  | 249  | 515   | 159  | 71   | 78   | 72   | 44   | ASABB      | Assembling on the Sabbath  |
| 1085  | 33   | 104   | 162  | 171  | 107  | 239  | 269  |            | <i>(***combined totals for all other literature not listed here)</i>   |
| 933   | 13   | 143   | 154  | 190  | 121  | 176  | 136  |            | <i>(combined totals for all custom personal items, such as personal letter answers, copies of papers, cards, etc.)</i> |
| 792   |      |       | 106  | 85   | 234  | 228  | 139  |            | <i>(label size notes sent as brief personal messages to readers)</i>   |
| 791   | 83   | 313   | 145  | 67   | 63   | 76   | 44   | HWA39G     | Did Christ Reorganize the Church? (1939 HWA government article)  |
| 689   | 157  | 254   | 132  | 46   | 34   | 43   | 23   | WCGSPL     | The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs & Troubles  |
| 634   |      | 336   | 124  | 52   | 55   | 46   | 21   | CALBAS     | Biblical Calendar Basics   |
| 481   |      | 3     | 248  | 79   | 82   | 51   | 18   | HOWGIV     | How Do We Give to the Eternal?   |
| 465   |      |       |      | 61   | 183  | 145  | 76   |            | <i>(Shelter in the Word back issues mailed separately)</i>   |
| 448   |      |       | 46   | 83   | 51   | 147  | 121  | RELIG      | What Is Christian Religion?  |
| 396   | 98   | 156   | 84   | 33   | 10   | 12   | 3    | COVLAW     | Does the New Covenant Do Away With the Letter of the Law?  |
| 392   | 59   | 196   | 91   | 23   | 11   | 9    | 3    | COVDO      | Just What Does the New Covenant Do?  |
| 390   | 27   | 11    | 88   | 102  | 88   | 47   | 27   | PUBLET     | Letter to people letting them know their letter was published  |
| 373   |      | 139   | 100  | 37   | 68   | 13   | 16   | SAMPSN     | Letter sent with Sample SN.  |
| 345   |      | 189   | 100  | 35   | 9    | 6    | 6    | TRUECH     | Where Is the True Church Today?  |
| 311   | 8    | 57    | 29   | 75   | 26   | 109  | 7    | RESFAC     | The Resurrection of Jesus Christ—Is it a Fact?   |
| 305   | 13   | 70    | 56   | 73   | 8    | 39   | 46   | BS7OR1     | The Bible Sabbath: Seventh or First Day?   |
| 284   |      |       | 111  | 61   | 36   | 45   | 31   | JOURNL     | The Journal: News of the Churches of God (sample copy)   |
| 276   | 19   | 124   | 59   | 25   | 23   | 15   | 11   | GIVSHO     | Giving and Sharing Order Form  |
| 268   |      |       | 109  | 43   | 29   | 35   | 52   | LRCOGD     | Living Room Church of God Directory  |
| 259   |      |       |      | 13   | 93   | 127  | 26   | SCABRO     | Scattered Brethren Contact List  |
| 240   |      | 46    | 120  | 36   | 11   | 16   | 11   | SABHIS     | Sabbath History Newsletter (sample copy)   |
| 236   |      | 104   | 71   | 35   | 12   | 9    | 5    | HEROOT     | Hebrew Roots Newsletter (sample copy)  |
| 226   | 11   | 102   | 43   | 11   | 7    | 8    | 44   | HRPO       | History Research Projects Order Form   |
| 224   |      | 119   | 49   | 37   | 3    | 7    | 9    | SABSEN     | The Sabbath Sentinel Magazine (and BSA order form)   |
| 192   |      |       | 75   | 43   | 22   | 41   | 11   | REASON     | The Reason for the Season  |
| 191   |      |       |      |      | 2    | 86   | 103  | EJUDGE     | What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment?  |
| 190   | 7    | 18    | 58   | 39   | 26   | 17   | 25   | GCGREL     | Global Church of God Relationship Package  |
| 177   |      |       | 68   | 51   | 37   | 11   | 10   | CHUGOV     | Church Government?   |
| 176   |      | 83    | 57   | 13   | 14   | 7    | 2    | BSTOOL     | Basic Bible Study Tools  |
| 174   |      | 17    | 84   | 21   | 15   | 18   | 19   | UNMEAT     | Does the Bible Permit Christians to Eat “Unclean” Meat in New Testament Times?   |
| 162   |      |       | 15   | 3    | 51   | 87   | 6    | MOVED      | Page telling people that we have moved   |
| 160   |      |       |      |      |      |      | 160  | ALLIVE     | All Who Die Shall Live Again!  |
| 158   |      | 70    | 47   | 25   | 7    | 6    | 3    | BEACON     | The Christian Beacon   |

## SERVANTS' NEWS

| TOTAL | 1995 | Y<br>1996 | E<br>1997 | A<br>1998 | R<br>1999 | 2000 | 2001 | ORDER<br>CODE | LITERATURE NAME  |
|-------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|------|---------------|--|
| 150   |      |           | 42        | 30        | 17        | 39   | 22   | GDPROB        | God, I've Got a Problem  |
| 141   |      |           |           | 46        | 35        | 33   | 27   | FBIC          | Freedom Biblical Information Center Catalog  |
| 139   |      |           |           |           |           |      | 139  | HOLYSC        | The Holy Scriptures  |
| 134   |      | 15        | 38        | 28        | 47        | 6    |      | CEMCOR        | CEM Correspondence Course  |
| 133   | 10   | 47        | 14        | 12        | 1         | 41   | 8    | BARNAB        | Barnabas Ministries Bookmark Bunch   |
| 132   |      |           | 67        | 44        | 9         | 10   | 2    | CONDER        | Is Christianity a Fraud? A Preliminary Assessment of the Conder Thesis   |
| 131   |      |           |           |           | 93        | 22   | 16   | MYST7         | The Mysterious 7-Day Cycle   |
| 130   |      | 55        | 40        | 18        | 8         | 7    | 2    | WHYSUN        | Why Do You Observe Sunday?   |
| 119   |      | 26        | 11        | 21        | 24        | 25   | 12   | STARTL        | Starting letter for someone put on the SN list by someone else   |
| 118   |      |           | 34        | 54        | 14        | 10   | 6    | HWABIO        | Herbert W. Armstrong: 1892-1986  |
| 110   |      |           | 35        | 37        | 22        | 7    | 9    | REMNIS        | The Remnant of Israel, An Analysis of G. G. Ruppert  |
| 100   |      |           |           | 51        | 23        | 15   | 11   | EIGHTS        | Eight Studies: Ordination, Laying on of Hands, Tithing, Nicolaitans, Cain, Balaam, Korah, Teachers                         |
| 95    |      |           |           | 44        | 17        | 32   | 2    | PASGID        | A Pastoral Guide on True Shepherding & Caring for the Flock of God with Servant Leadership & "Being Helpers of Their Joy!" |
| 94    |      |           |           |           | 50        | 29   | 15   | MAY74         | May 2, 1974 Member Letter about Church Government  |
| 92    |      |           |           |           | 27        | 18   | 47   | SWLIST        | Shelter in the Word Literature List  |
| 88    |      | 42        | 31        | 9         | 4         | 2    |      | LAZARS        | Lazarus and the Rich Man   |
| 87    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 87   | KERSHA        | Unlicensed Church Materials Order Form   |
| 86    |      |           |           |           | 49        | 32   | 5    | HWACW1        | Herbert Armstrong Co-Worker Letter Reprints  |
| 81    | 63   | 2         | 7         | 6         | 3         |      |      | ALLET         | Letter to Many Brethren, Bulk mailed February 1995   |
| 78    |      |           | 32        | 31        | 6         | 6    | 3    | WNUSBP        | Rebuttal to the "Worldwide News" (12/19/95) Article by Ralph Orr: "United States and Britain in Prophecy"                  |
| 76    |      |           | 44        | 25        | 6         | 1    |      | SEVERA        | The Seven Eras of Ancient Israel—Type of the Eras of the True Church   |
| 75    | 21   | 26        | 8         | 4         | 5         | 5    | 6    | RECEXP        | Current Statement of Offerings and Expenses (automatically sent to the approx. 300 people who send offerings each year).   |
| 74    |      |           |           |           | 46        | 15   | 13   | CG7OLD        | Church of God 7th Day Old Documents About Herbert Armstrong  |
| 65    |      |           | 20        | 38        | 6         | 1    |      | ASSERT        | Should God's People Be Assertive?  |
| 64    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 64   | SASABB        | Scriptures About the Sabbath   |
| 63    |      |           |           |           |           | 56   | 7    | ROMECH        | Are You Ready for Rome's Challenge?  |
| 62    |      |           | 29        | 16        | 4         | 11   | 2    | CBSG          | Christian Bible Study Guide  |
| 58    |      | 10        | 32        | 6         | 5         | 3    | 2    | WAITAR        | Ask reader to wait for comment on article submitted.   |
| 57    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 57   | WHENHE        | When Will God Heal?  |
| 55    | 14   | 27        | 9         | 4         |           |      | 1    | GOALIT        | Explaining current goals of Servants' News and lit list  |
| 53    |      |           | 41        | 9         | 2         | 1    |      | UTIMEM        | Utilizing the Members in the Local Congregations and In the Work: A System to Ensure Fair Opportunity for All              |
| 52    |      |           | 1         |           | 38        | 8    | 5    | PURGCD        | Purge letter sent with card when no communication for years.   |
| 51    |      |           |           |           | 41        | 4    | 6    | PASPER        | Passover in Perspective  |
| 47    |      |           |           |           |           | 40   | 7    | GVEY2K        | God vs. Evolution Y2K  |
| 43    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 43   | DECLAR        | The Declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution   |
| 41    |      |           |           | 29        | 7         | 4    | 1    | THIDEA        | The Theological Marketplace of Ideas Or, the Three "C's" of Ministry   |
| 40    |      |           |           | 29        | 4         | 4    | 3    | COMINT        | Computer and Internet/World Wide Web Guide   |
| 39    |      |           |           |           |           | 5    | 34   | SN007S        | Response page for July/August 2000 Issue   |
| 38    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 38   | THINKO        | Think On These Things Sheet Music  |
| 36    |      |           |           |           |           | 36   |      | GIDEON        | Lessons from Gideon  |
| 35    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 35   | LPROV         | Learning from the Proverbs   |
| 34    |      |           |           |           |           | 30   | 4    | COGNEW        | The Churches of God Newsletter   |
| 32    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 32   | ARCOG         | Ambassador Report: Should Church of God Brethren Read It?  |
| 31    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 31   | NEWLIF        | A New Life   |
| 27    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 27   | SINOTH        | What Should I Do About the Sins of Others?   |
| 26    |      |           |           |           |           | 24   | 2    | KJVERR        | King James Version Translation Errors  |
| 25    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 25   | DISFEL        | Is Disfellowshipping a Christian Practice?   |
| 24    |      |           |           |           |           |      | 24   | MERLET        | March 14, 1980 Letter to Rod Meredith from Herbert Armstrong   |

# More Answers to Hierarchical Leader Letter

Robert J. Thiel, Answering for Rod Meredith of the Living Church of God

*Mr. Thiel requested that I print his letter as one continuous piece without breaking it up. I attempted to do this by assigning letters to each of his 18 sections to which I wanted to respond, but too much page-turning was required to read it. You may honor Mr. Thiel's request by reading just his letter first, then coming back to read my responses later. The Living Church of God may be reached at P.O. Box 501304, San Diego, CA 92150; tel: 858-673-7470; e-mail: media@cogl.org. —Norman Edwards*

## **LETTER:**

Robert J. Thiel  
Arroyo Grande, CA  
COGwriter@aol.com

December 18, 2001

Dear Norman Edwards:

This is in response to your letter to hierarchical COG organizations. I briefly mentioned your letter to Roderick C. Meredith and he said I could respond to it on his behalf if I wished. For the record, I should probably start off by saying that I did not show Dr. Meredith the letter or mention most of the questions to him, nor am I on the payroll of the Living Church of God (LCG), nor do I hold any ordained position. Your questions will be in *italics* as well as some of your more relevant comments.

1. *Do not the members of your own church organization prove that the Eternal does not always govern through the top down? ...church government would be cleaned up by God Himself... no group has any "signs" which make it obviously "the one"... no media outreach anything like the WCG... they (LCG members) disobeyed the man appointed by Herbert Armstrong.*

Not exactly. The Bible teaches that although we are to submit to secular (1Pet 2:13–14) and non-secular human governments (1Tim 5:17; Heb 13:7), "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). In case of any conflict, the Bible teaches we must individually do what is right. The Global Church of God (GCG) was formed only three months after WCG released its *God Is* booklet and we feel that God was making it clearer for His people who saw that J. Tkach was teaching apostasy that there was a place to go. Both Herbert Armstrong and the Apostle Paul taught, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1Cor 11:1). We are not to imitate areas of anyone's sins, nor are we to put up with false doctrine (Eph 4:14). The same Paul who wrote, "Remember those who have the

*Servants' News, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan, 48872-0107, USA*

April 25, 2000

Dear Leader in a Hierarchical Church Organization,

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I am sending this letter to Church of God leaders who are attempting to continue the work of Herbert Armstrong. If you have answers to the following questions, I will gladly publish your entire response in *Servants' News* (up to 3,000 words)—even if you send a previously written article that answers these questions. After Pentecost, I intend to publish lists of groups that *did* and *did not* respond to this letter—both in *Servants' News* and in *The Journal*.

1. **Do not the members in your own church organization prove that the Eternal does not always govern from the top down?** For the past 20 years of his life, Herbert Armstrong taught that any problems "at the top" of the church government would be cleaned up by God Himself. Yet, Herbert Armstrong appointed Joseph Tkach, who appointed his son, who reversed much of the truth that Herbert Armstrong taught. Herbert Armstrong's appointees never told former WCG ministers or members which was the "right group" to join. No group has any "signs" that make it obviously "the one": no miracles like the early apostles, no annual new-convert growth over 10%, no media outreach anything like the WCG. Your group may claim to be the only *one* following Herbert Armstrong correctly, but it was your ministers and members who were able to think for themselves, study the Scriptures and *decide to join*. They were not commanded from the "top down", but they disobeyed the man appointed by Herbert Armstrong.

2. **There are members who left the WCG, joined another WCG split-off group, then joined your group. Are not these members proof that these other split-off groups are part of the Church of God and therefore brethren?** Does your group automatically rebaptize or discipline former WCG members who attended another split-off group before joining yours? Or do you welcome them with open arms? I think it is wonderful to welcome them. But if you consider people in other groups as *brethren*, then why don't you encourage your members to fellowship with *these brethren*, share joint activities and services, etc.? Why do you continue the sectarianism that Paul spoke against? (1Cor 1:10–17; 3:1–10.) How do you explain this to the new converts that come to your group? If your group is truly and obviously doing the most significant work of God now, would not the intermixing of brethren cause more of them to see your group and begin to attend it? Or are you afraid that your members will continue to check your teaching against Scripture as they did when they left the WCG—and might see problems with your group?

3. **Is it possible that Christ intended to end Herbert Armstrong's work?** Nearly every group that tries to continue his work is splitting and shrinking. HWA has been dead for 14 years—almost no teenagers remember seeing him alive; the world leaders he visited are out of office. In another 14 years, most former-WCG ministers will be retired or deceased, and most of the adults who heard HWA prophesy "these things will happen in your lifetime" during the 40's, 50's and 60's will be deceased.

**Eternal judgment** is one of the six basic doctrines (Heb 6:1–2). Paul told believers: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2Cor 5:10). He also said: "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged" (1Cor 11:31). I am not your judge; you do not have to answer these questions to me. **But if you cannot answer these questions to your own members and the members of other groups, how will you answer Christ?** It is easy for a person to think he is right when he is surrounded by people who agree with him. I know; I worked for the WCG for 18 years. It is much more difficult when one must answer questions from others who disagree. The New Testament shows Christ and His Apostles spent much time answering difficult questions from Pharisees, heretics and sometimes brethren. What will you do?

Sincerely, Norman S. Edwards



rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you" (Heb 13:7) also wrote, "But even if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8). Our members knew they were not to obey the lawless teachings of another gospel from J. Tkach, and it matters not who appointed him.

**RESPONSE:** I am glad that we agree that we are not commanded to follow a human leader just because he was appointed by someone we respect. I think this also applies to an LCG member who feels that his LCG minister is doing or teaching something unbiblical—the member would be considered free to do what he understands to be right, even if the minister were appointed by Mr. Meredith.

**LETTER:** Jesus taught His people, "Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:20) and that, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (6:21). LCG spends approximately the same percentage of its income to proclaim the Gospel as WCG did under Herbert Armstrong (I verified this personally with Fred Dattolo who worked in WCG's and LCG's accounting departments); I do not believe that this can be said about the other large COGs (but you can check with them if you wish). With currently about 137 television stations and 9 radio stations broadcasting *Tomorrow's World*, LCG probably has the largest media outreach of any COG. And while many of those stations are cable-access, LCG has about the same ratio of telephone responses per church attendee to its telecast as WCG used to have to *The World Tomorrow*. LCG's new baptism (those who were never part of WCG) to telephone respondent ratio is nearly three times as high as WCG's used to be. GCG/LCG has had more baptisms of people who previously had not attended any COG than any other group that I am aware of.

We believe that LCG has been most biblically consistent in doctrine and practice to WCG when Herbert Armstrong was alive than any other group we are aware of, so in that way you could say that LCG is "the one". The more people in the COGs that support us, the more extensive our media outreach should become—any who do criticize us for our total impact in

this area, but do not support us, should understand that.

LCG has prayed and fasted for some of the other miraculous signs you alluded to which we believe God will grant when it suits His time table (there are some few COG groups which claim to have had direct supernatural revelation now, but suffice it to say that my research into them questions that the 'revelations' were from God).

**RESPONSE:** Wow! You are stating that the LCG is "the one" church organization, which means that the other similar groups are not "the one". **So how are members to make this life-critical decision of finding the right one?** By a very few ratios and measures of gospel preaching money, baptisms, TV stations, etc. The Bible does say we can know a group by its fruit, and it is good that the LCG and many other church organizations are preaching the gospel, baptizing, etc. **But does the Bible mention overall spiritual fruit, or does it give a formula we can use to compare budgets and baptism and know which group is "the one"?** If you believe God expects members to make this most-important decision based upon those numbers, I would expect you to clearly state the exact amounts and ratios of money you spend on evangelism, the exact number of baptisms, etc. I would expect the LCG to have a booklet giving those numbers, and giving the same numbers for competing organizations, proving the LCG is best. How can you know that the LCG is "the one" without those numbers?

You used ratios for some of your figures probably because the UCG-IA, being larger, has higher absolute numbers. Cannot you thank God that the UCG-IA exists and is doing a similar work, even though it may be slightly less effective in a few areas? On the other hand, you will probably find that Christian Educational Ministries (Ron Dart) has a much greater ratio of money going to Gospel preaching than the LCG. They are smaller, yes, but what does God count: a high ratio or total numbers?

Please realize that the areas you mention are not the only commands given to the Church in the Bible. Some groups may have more local congregations and serve them better; others may give more to the poor (as the Apostles frequently mentioned). Other groups may do more

in international areas. Christ taught that various parts of His body should not consider themselves better than the others (1Cor 12). Does anyone really believe that in the judgment, Christ is going to give everyone a quiz on the various Church organization's media statistics and fault those who were in the wrong group? Will He fault you if there is a group with better numbers that you never found out about? What if the non-aligned believers reached more people and had more baptisms, but no man knew it because only Christ was keeping score?

Also, please realize that **nearly every** CoG group says that they could be doing a much bigger work if only lots more brethren would come to them. Many also say that God will eventually give them miraculous signs and wonders. Personally, I do not think God will grant any such things to part of his body that will use them to exalt themselves over the other parts of His body. "And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary" (1Cor 12:21–22). He wants to see us learn to work together and love each other.

**LETTER:** 2a. *There are members who left WCG, joined another WCG split-off, then joined your group, Are not these members proof that these other split-off groups are part of the Church of God and therefore brethren? Does your group automatically rebaptize or discipline former WCG members...? Or do you welcome them with open arms?*

While we cannot speak for all the 'split-off' groups, we do believe that there are Church of God members, our brethren, who fellowship in other groups. If some who were once part of various COG groups attend with us, we do not automatically baptize them. I know in our video group we welcome them with open arms, and that is the position of LCG.

2.b. *But if you consider people in other groups as brethren, then why don't you encourage your members to fellowship with these brethren, share joint activities, and services, etc.? ...If your group is truly and obviously doing the most significant work of God now, would not the intermixing of brethren cause more of them to see your group and begin to attend it? Or are*

you afraid that your members will continue to check your teaching against Scripture...?

We encourage our members to check the Scriptures to “prove all things” as Paul taught, thus we are not afraid of them looking into their Bibles. In keeping with the admonition to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25), I personally have attended with UCG on many occasions when I travel and there has been no LCG group in the area. This is consistent with what the Apostle Paul did as well (except he visited Jewish synagogues), as well as the practices of the old WCG (where CG7 was considered an option for travelers).

However, we have differences in doctrine and practice with the other COGs, and cannot wholly condone their teachings as appropriate. The Bible itself has many lessons and warnings about false teachers, and warns the leadership to protect against that (e.g. Acts 20:28–30). It even shows that some teachers called of God do not understand everything as well as they should (e.g. Acts 18:24–26); so why should our members intentionally be exposed to some we feel are in that category? Amos also wrote, “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?”. And Solomon, “Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with your might”, thus assuming they agree with LCG, we feel that it is not appropriate for our members to regularly fellowship outside LCG.

If LCG members regularly attend non-LCG services, we believe that this gives credence to a current misconception that all the COG groups are about the same. We believe our members set a better example for those in other COGs by regularly attending with LCG. We have no prohibition with our members meeting or having activities with individuals in other COGs (unless they have been specifically disfellowshipped or some other specific problem may be involved). Peter said that we are to “grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:16) and believe that regular attendance at LCG services best helps accomplish this goal. We believe that those who are looking for doctrinal consistency and the practice of placing the top priority on proclaiming the Gospel will be led to find LCG.

**RESPONSE:** I am glad that you will attend with other groups when you trav-

el and there are no LCG services. I am glad you see them as brethren. But what are LCG members supposed to do who live in areas where there are no LCG services? Would it not be better that they follow Hebrews 11:25 and assemble with another group of believers there? Yet I know of LCG members who were told they must drive many hours to an LCG congregation or else stay home—when another group has a congregation nearby. Could not you publish a book titled *Known Errors of the UCG-IA*, so that your members could be protected from the tiny bit of false doctrine there? Then they could have fellowship and share all the good things the Scriptures mention.

In most cases, the people who want to attend multiple groups are not new believers, but people who have been in the CoG's for 20 to 40 years. Numerous scriptures show that those who will be in the first resurrection must be willing to suffer and die for Christ (Matt 16:24–25; 19:28–29; Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17; Phil 1:8; 2Tim 2:12, Rev 20:4). These scriptures are not addressed to apostles or leaders. After great persecution, it was brethren “who were scattered” that “went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:1, 4). Should not brethren who have been in the church many years be able to be teachers (Heb 5:12), able to recognize and correct the **minor** doctrinal error that they might find in another Church of God group? How will people endure to the death in the future and rule in the Kingdom if they cannot accept such a small challenge now?

Another question that should be asked about the policy of not letting LCG members frequently attend other groups: Is this policy working? Are thousands of people from other groups flocking to the LCG because of this policy? To me, it sounds a lot more like standard “us versus them” rivalry like one might find between rival sports teams. Romans 14 shows beyond a doubt that brethren with some doctrinal disagreements can fellowship together. Jesus clearly stated that His followers would be known by their love, not by their adherence to a group that has slightly better statistics than some others.

**LETTER:** 2.c. *Why do you continue the sectarianism that Paul spoke against? (1Cor 1:10–17; 3:1–10). How do you*

*explain this to new converts that come into your group?*

It is somewhat shocking that you would ask that first question as you recently wrote “Mr. Pack and I perform the same service for many former WCG members: We both teach against hierarchical government” (*Servants' News*, May/June 2001, p.18). Proper hierarchical governance does a better job than what you advocate to insure that “you all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1Cor 1:10). We do not claim to be ‘of Meredith’ or any other man. We believe that the major work is being done in LCG and that Dr. Meredith is the human head of that group, under Jesus Christ.

**RESPONSE:** For years I also thought that hierarchical government is the solution to unity: One man answers the questions on behalf of Christ, there is no division among the people, and those who oppose the decisions are removed. But is that what Paul did? And has that worked for the GCG/LCG?

If we quote the beginning of your verse it says “Now I plead with you, **brethren**, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (1Cor 1:10). If there was a hierarchy, why isn't Paul telling the Corinthian minister to keep these brethren “in line”? Also notice, that he is “pleading”, not ordering on threat of disfellowshipment. The same Greek word, *parakaleo*, is used in 1 Corinthians 16:12 where Paul “pleads” for Apollos to make a trip, but he decided not to. In this same letter Paul says: “...when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you” (1Cor 11:18–19). It is wonderful for believers to be of one mind in Christ, but Paul does **not** teach that the way to achieve this is for one person to command all others. A unity created by a church hierarchy with an “agree or get out policy” is no different than the many dictatorships throughout history that proclaimed the same thing.

Since you mentioned Dave Pack, I think it is important to examine how, in his case, hierarchy was a detriment to unity. When I worked for the GCG in

1993–1994, there were many complaints about Mr. Pack's abusive nature and Mr. Meredith once said that he continually had to correct Mr. Pack and would not keep him as a minister, except that he kept bringing so many new members and money to the GCG. When I left the GCG, I heard many more complaints about Mr. Pack—even found that he was the cause for many leaving the GCG. But because the GCG was a hierarchy, headquarters always heard Mr. Pack's side of problems, but rarely heard the member's side (Pack warned them not to “go around him” to headquarters). Some members left, but many stayed, willing to endure this “bad minister” to remain in the “one true Church organization”. After Mr. Pack began his own organization, there was no longer a hierarchy over him to defend him—it was more like a local congregation. He still brought in hundreds of members, but when they saw his abusive ways, they either brought it to his attention and were disfellowshipped, or just left on their own. Almost every year, Pack's headquarters staff has left his group after seeing how he operates.

**I believe this incident shows that the GCG (now LCG) leaders thought they had unity but did not. Mr. Pack was able to continually go against GCG policies but keep the GCG headquarters supporting him. When Mr. Pack left the larger hierarchical structure, the members in his group are now much better able to get to the heart of the problem and solve it (leave).**

**LETTER:** As far as new members are concerned, we believe in Church eras and believe that rejection of governance may be one of the signs of a Laodicean attitude (as the term Laodicea seems to mean the ‘people rule’, ‘people decide’, or ‘rights of the people’). We believe that LCG has picked up the ‘Philadelphia mantle’. The other COGs that are accepted by God fall into various eras and God can determine which.

**RESPONSE:** Here you are giving another reason why brethren should choose the LCG over the other groups and it seems to be largely conjecture. You use terms like “church era” and “Philadelphia mantle” which are not in any Bible translation that I know of. Your organization

teaches against doctrines like the “Trinity” and “Rapture” because they are not in the Bible, so why should anyone accept your non-biblical doctrines? Seven times, Christ tells every person to listen to every message to every church (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). I think we should look at all of those messages and see if they apply to us .

“Laodicean” comes from two words meaning “rule” or “justice” and “people”. Both you and I agree that Christ is the head of the Church and that He rules it through people. Our only difference is how many people. You believe He rules through one (Mr. Meredith) and I believe He rules through the entire Body. The word “Laodicean” says nothing about how many people should be ruling. Christ does clearly say that Laodiceans are lukewarm and think they are “rich, wealthy and have need of nothing”. This reminds me a little bit about your claim of spending the most money for preaching. It also reminds me of the time Mr. Meredith said he thought they understood 90 to 95% of all biblical truth. I will go on record as saying I do not think I will know that much before I die. I have continually learned new things over the last seven years, both from my own study and the study of others. Am I saying that the LCG is the Laodicean church? No. There are probably people with Laodicean problems there, but Christ promises to correct them individually (Rev 3:19) and any of them can come to Him individually (v20–21).

**LETTER:** The Philadelphians accept that “Christ is head of the church” (Eph 5:23), and accept authority within the Church: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ” (Eph 4:11–15). I am aware that you interpret that scripture differently than how we do, so I have simply quoted it so

that those who have an ear to hear can hear it.

**RESPONSE:** I've never found a group that does not agree that “Christ is the head of the church”. The question is always, “Does He work through one or many men?” With Christ having infinite power and wisdom, it is hard to understand why He would channel all of that through just one fragile human, but let us look at your scripture. The NKJV rightly translates the Greek in Ephesians 4:11: “He Himself gave...” Usually, just Greek verb endings would be used to indicate the word “he”, but this verse uses the Greek word *autos* for the subject to emphasize that He is doing it Himself. I believe that spiritual gifts that brethren can recognize are given through Christ, not through a human hierarchy.

**LETTER:** Here is a quote from the *Living Church News* on LCG and Philadelphia, “Mr. Armstrong wrote that he restored to the Church of God at least 18 truths that the previous era had lost (*Mystery of the Ages*, p. 251, 1985 hardback edition, p. 207, 1985 paperback edition, section “Partial Truth”, chapter “Mystery of the Church”). Philadelphians are the ones who hold to those truths (as well as all other biblical truths)—including governance—and will be able to have a crown and to rule! Philadelphians have ‘kept My command to persevere’ (Rev 3:10). Holding fast to Truth, while putting a priority on proclaiming the Gospel, is what sets the Philadelphian Church apart... The Living Church of God cannot claim that all its members are Philadelphian, but we do believe we are a uniquely Philadelphian remnant. Can one find a larger or more effective ‘corporate body’ which retains the Truth as taught by Mr. Armstrong, without adding non-biblical ‘revelations’ or diverting its members from making their top priority the Great Commission of proclaiming the Gospel as established by Jesus Christ? No! One can expect that Philadelphians, who care about doing an effective Work and holding fast to the Truth, will naturally support the Living Church of God” (Thiel, Robert, What is a Philadelphian? *Living Church News*, Jul-Aug 2001; p.15).

**RESPONSE:** I attempted to honestly study Herbert Armstrong's 18 truths in our Dec 1998 issue (p 32). Only four of

them are truths that **he** restored to common teaching. Most were taught widely by other groups, and at least two were not, from Bible understanding, "truths". Again, if you are going to declare the LCG "the one" church based upon evangelism spending and your continued following of Herbert Armstrong's doctrine, I think it very important that someone write down exactly what those figures are and what your doctrines are so they can be honestly compared with other groups.

**LETTER:** Although we believe that, due to confusion and misreporting over the last years, there are some Philadelphians in other fellowships, we believe that the largest remnant of the Philadelphians fellowship with LCG. I should add LCG teaches that just being a member of LCG does not make one a "Philadelphian" and that we undoubtedly have some "Laodiceans" in our midst.

**RESPONSE:** That is a good teaching. You may have some with the characteristics of Ephesus, Sardis or other groups, too.

**LETTER:** 3. *Is it possible that Christ intended to end Herbert Armstrong's work?*

Perhaps it would be wisest to first look at what Herbert Armstrong himself wrote on this matter, "God has given his Church dual responsibility: 1) 'Go ye into all the world' and proclaim the good news—announcement—of the coming kingdom of God. 2) 'Feed my sheep'. But in feeding the 'sheep', developing in them God's spiritual character, God has given them their part in supporting, backing up, the great commission: 'Go ye into all the world'" (*Mystery of the Ages*, p. 265, 1985 hardback edition, p. 218, 1985 paperback edition, section "Real Purpose of the Church", chapter "Mystery of the Church"). "From the year 1931, exactly 1,900 years (a century of time cycles) from the foundation of the Church, this small remnant of the original true Church of God began to take on new life as the Philadelphia era. This era of the Church was to produce fruit" (*Mystery of the Ages*, pp. 289–290, 1985 hardback edition, p. 227, 1985 paperback edition, section "Restoration of God's Truth to Church", chapter "Mystery of the Church"). "But Christ said to His

Philadelphia era Church, that because we have but little strength, He would OPEN THOSE DOORS TO US (Revelation 3:8)" (Letter, Nov. 19, 1976). "It may be that the Work that God has given me to do is complete, but not the Work of God's Church, which will be faithfully doing God's Work till Christ, the True Head of this Church, returns... **Remember brethren, this is not the work of Herbert W. Armstrong... The greatest work lies ahead... Never before in the history of the Church has it been possible to reap so great a harvest. It has only been made possible through modern technology, beginning with the printing press, radio, television... Each of you must commit yourself to support God's Work... God's work must push ahead as never before. God is opening up new doors in television**" (Letter, 1/10/86).

**RESPONSE:** I remember reading and believing these things that Herbert Armstrong said for many years. But if one thinks about them, they are extremely contradictory. If print and electronic media are the "open door" of Revelation 3:7, then every church organization that uses that media is "Philadelphian". If electronic media is only to be considered an "open door" for the WCG because it was given better prices and airing times than all the other groups, the proof of that has never been published. If it is only to be considered an "open door" for the WCG because the WCG had more media than any other group, then we are saying that Philadelphia had "the most strength" rather than "a little strength" (verse 8).

So what is an open door? I once read about a missionary group that went to a Muslim country to start a congregation. When they arrived, the police told them that such preaching was illegal and that they could not stay. The missionary responded that God had opened this door and that they would not be able to shut it. The police could have arrested them, but did not and the mission lasted for many years. I think this is just one of many ways this scripture could be applied.

**LETTER:** And to be sure that this portion of the work would continue after he died, Herbert Armstrong insured that there were others designated to continue to make television programs after his death. One of those was evangelist Richard

Ames, who remains faithful to this mission to this day, as he is still making television programs to proclaim the Gospel! Another evangelist who was preaching the Gospel in the French language over radio while Mr. Armstrong was alive, Dibar Apartian, continues to preach it to this day. When I asked him if Mr. Armstrong told him to stop doing this in the event of his death, Mr. Apartian responded, "To the contrary, he told me he wanted me to go on more stations." This concept is confirmed by Mr. Armstrong in his third to last letter, "I thank God that he has organized this present work of his so thoroughly that regardless of the outcome of my present illness, the work will continue right on to the Second Coming of Christ" (Letter dated 12/23/85). Thus it seems clear that Mr. Armstrong felt that he was the leader of the Philadelphia era, but that if he died prior to the time of the end, that he considered that his work was done, but that the Church should continue to preach the gospel to the world!

**RESPONSE:** Christ clearly told us that we should be doing His work when He returns (Matt 24:45). I am glad that the LCG is reaching out to teach others. I think you misunderstood my question. To me, the end of the work of Herbert Armstrong does not mean the end of God's work at all, but to you, I think they are the same thing.

Mr. Armstrong's bolded statement above, however, is a discredit to Christ and clearly in error. He credits Christ with organizing the WCG so its work would continue, but **it was the very organization of the WCG** that allowed one man and a few of his friends to completely change it within a few years. Other works similar to Mr. Armstrong's continued, but they all started from zero, making new booklets, new magazines, new programs, etc. Each one thinks they are "the one", and largely thanks to Mr. Armstrong's approach, they have no idea how to show love toward or co-operate with each other. **How did Christ organize His work during the first century** when there was much greater persecution? He sent apostles, prophets, brethren, and copies of the New Testament everywhere and He directed them personally. There was variety in doctrine and practice, but there was no central target that Jewish or Roman per-

secutors could strike to disable the Church.

**LETTER:** We agree with those writings by Herbert Armstrong as the Living Church of God believes, "the primary function of the true Church of God is to GO to all nations and preach the same powerful message Jesus preached about the coming Kingdom of God!" (Meredith, Roderick C. *Should You Be Baptized?* Booklet. 1999; p. 17). However, in your question you specifically asked about Christ. The best way to address that would seem to be to look to Scripture:

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left... Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me'" (Matt 25:31-33, 44-46). These are people who said they would have done the work if they understood that is what Jesus wanted, however they did not minister to those Jesus wanted them to minister to.

**RESPONSE:** I am not sure how this scripture fits your subject. It is specifically talking about **individuals** taking care of other people when they see they have physical needs. It is not talking about preaching the Gospel or tithing to a "work". I have occasionally helped people in need, or let them stay at my house. Does the LCG encourage its members to do this?

**LETTER:** "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then the end shall come" (Matt 24:14). I would like to emphasize that **THE END HAS NOT YET COME** so we should not give up early! Scripture indicates that Jesus also does not want us to give up early, "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over

his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing" (Matt 24:44-46).

I should probably add that one person argued with me that since Jesus does not return until after the place of safety, that this verse does not mean we need to proclaim the Gospel now—how does this person know what work may be done in the place of safety? And since it is likely that many of God's people will die before then, for them, the Master could come anytime; also LCG's teaching is that we do go to a place of safety at the time of the end. James wrote, "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:18-20). Thus it would seem more logical that the work should continue to be done now. Remember it was Jesus who also said, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4); it is still 'day', which means we are to do the work as long as we possibly can.

Jesus had a few comments for those who felt it was not time to do the work, "Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors'" (John 4:34-38). Jesus also taught, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (John 15:16).

**RESPONSE:** Again, I agree we should keep working, I just do not agree that we should teach in the name of Herbert Armstrong or claim to continue his work.

**LETTER:** Some have claimed the work begun under Herbert Armstrong is through, because it was only to be done

by an apostle and since LCG does not claim to have any apostles, we should not do the work. Jesus, however, sent non-apostles out to heal the sick and preach about the Kingdom of God (Luke 10:1-12). God used a deacon (Stephen), one who was only supposed to serve tables, to get His message out and even get a vision from God (Acts 6-7). "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:3-4), those everywhere preaching were not just apostles. Interestingly, Paul started preaching (Acts 9:19-20) BEFORE he was made an apostle (Acts 13:2). Timothy was an evangelist (2Tim 4:5) and not an apostle (2Cor 2:1), yet Paul wrote, "Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for **he does the work of the Lord, as I also do**" (1Cor 16:10) and "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season" (2Tim 4:2). There simply is no biblical restriction that preaching the Gospel must be limited to apostles.

**RESPONSE:** Great. I agree with you here. We do not need apostles, evangelists or even "ordained ministers" to preach the gospel. If you check your Bible (ignoring the headings added later) you will see that it does not say that Stephen was a deacon—he was simply appointed to wait on tables. Apollos started preaching without contact from the apostles at all.

**LETTER:** Some independents and other COG groups claim that they do not need to place a priority on proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom to the world as witness, because they claim they are tasked primarily with "feeding the flock".

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (Jms 1:22). Jesus said, "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt 10:7-8). He did not say to stop giving after He died, to the contrary He taught, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them

to observe all things that I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age'” (Matt 28:18–20). Notice that Jesus told the disciples to do both, as Mr. Armstrong also wrote, but to first go to all the nations.

Philadelphians need to keep preaching to the world until the end comes, since they will be around until the end comes (Revelation 3:10).

**RESPONSE:** If you believe that there is “one true church organization”, I can understand why you would expect that organization to fulfill **all** of the biblical commands to the church. I would also be quite concerned that my organization has done virtually nothing to reach the people of China, Russia, Islamic nations, etc. But if one believes that Christ rules His church made of many congregations and ministries, and that He has clearly shown you what He wants you to do (which might be “feed a flock”), then I would not feel bad about not preaching the gospel as the LCG does. I can also read an article about hundreds of thousands of Chinese Sabbatarians and know that Christ is taking care of those people whether or not they and Rod Meredith know about each other.

**LETTER:** 4. *The New Testament shows that Christ and His Apostles spent much time answering difficult questions from Pharisees, heretics and sometimes brethren. What will you do?*

I have done so here.

**RESPONSE:** Thank you very much! I think it is a shame that most top leaders of COG groups never answer questions in an open forum (where they must either answer any question or clearly be seen as refusing to answer) as Christ and the apostles did. But as the old leaders depart, maybe a new generation of Church of God leaders will emerge that will answer questions, and we may be able to grow in our understanding and appreciation of each other.

**LETTER:** Regarding the New Testament, let's read what Paul told Timothy on this matter, “I urged you... that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause dispute rather than godly edification which is from faith” (1Tim 1:3–4); he also told Titus

“there are many insubordinate” (Titus 1:10). I assume that when you sent this letter, you did not intend to change your mind on “hierarchical governments”, but I do hope that perhaps some of your readership will realize that if they choose to support LCG, that LCG is serious about getting the Gospel out, and that our form of governance has been more effective than others to do what we are doing.

**RESPONSE:** I hoped that everyone would learn from these letters. I hoped that either I would come to new understanding of how multiple similar CoG groups can function, each claiming to be “the one” church, or that these CoG groups would see the difficulty with their position and think about making peace with each other. When you concluded your form of government was “more effective than others”, which other groups did you study and find less effective? The Church of God Seventh Day groups do not have a strong central hierarchy, but still have over 200,000 members worldwide. The Gideon Bible Society is not hierarchical, and it has taken the Word of God more places than the WCG did. If God's will for the WCG members was for all to individually recognize that they should leave and join the GCG/LCG, then the WCG was less than 10% effective in its mission, because less than that percentage joined the GCG/LCG. If we want to simply consider “warning the world” as the WCG's mission, we also must classify it as ineffective because it taught that the end was coming “in a few/ten/fifteen short years” or “certainly within your lifetime”. These phrases appear frequently in the WCG correspondence course and prophetic booklets. The “short years” phrases are now all completely wrong and the “lifetime” ones are becoming more wrong by the day. The generation which Mr. Armstrong warned has not seen the great tribulation, but is gradually going to their graves in relative peace. How can you fault them for saying: “Mr. Armstrong's timing was wrong so the Bible says we do not have to listen to him (Deut 18:22), we therefore reject the rest of his message.”

**LETTER:** It should be added that part of the problem in addressing your points is that you seem to have your own ideas about how “hierarchical organizations” are

to handle governance, etc. In my response I have NOT attempted to address issues you may raise about the answers provided (and as I mentioned to you on the telephone, if you are going to comment on this letter, please comment after running the letter in its entirety—do not break it up).

**RESPONSE:** I'm sorry that I broke up your letter, but that was the only readable way to respond to it on a point by point basis, as you broke my letter up and responded to it that way.

**LETTER:** To some degree, I question the wisdom of answering your questions, but since I told you I would, I have tried to do so to at least keep my word. Paul wrote, “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those in who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth” (2Tim 2:23–25).

The sad fact is that my answers will probably not change the mindset of those who are against COGs with “hierarchical governments”. It is my hope that those who once claimed to believe in “hierarchical governance” and believed that the Church's top priority was to proclaim the Gospel, will begin to understand that LCG is the COG group which is closest in doctrine and practice to WCG when Herbert Armstrong was alive, and will be willing to support us as we try to help humanity.

Sincerely, Robert J. Thiel

**RESPONSE:** I thank you very much for writing this letter and making your case. I doubt these are foolish questions as I have heard many people ask them—including people who were drawn to study the Bible by an LCG telecast, but then began attending an independent fellowship when they could not find good answers to these questions.

I am not sure why you do not expect anyone to change based upon what you write. If this situation were reversed and I were to write an article about government, and you were to respond to it as I have done, and it were to be printed in an LCG publication, I would expect to get dozens, maybe hundreds, of

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**“Christ... Leaving Us an Example” from page 1**

“though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb 5:8). And, He set an example for us:

**For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps (1Pet 2:21).**

This is not just so much religious talk. Christ really expected us to do this. And as we will see, His apostles really did do it.

<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. <sup>15</sup> And He died for all, **so that those who live might live no longer for themselves**, but for him who died and was raised for them... <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, **and has given us the ministry of reconciliation**; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **entrusting the message of reconciliation to us**. <sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2Cor 5:14–15, 18–20, NRSV).

Christ expected believers to “die” to themselves and to continue on doing His ministry, even if that meant their own deaths. He did not say that it would be easy: but He did promise to make it possible and he did say that it would be worth it.

“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you...” (John 15:20).

Therefore **be imitators of God** as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma (Eph 5:1–2).

“Greater love has no one than this, than **to lay down one’s life for his friends**. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (John 15:13–14).

Jesus said that following Him would make our lives very different—even take us away from our own families. But He said that His reward and

eternal life is more valuable than gaining the whole world.

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross [or “stake”] and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt 10:37–39).

The theme of being willing to lose one’s own life to follow Jesus seems to be a frequent theme of His teaching. Matthew (and other Gospels) record Jesus talking about it more than once:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross [or “stake”], and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then **He will reward each according to his works**” (Matt 16:24–27)

### What Did Jesus Do?

Whilst the single biggest major topic of the four Gospels is the righteous teachings of Jesus, **the clear second is the story of His interactions with the human leaders of this day**. The Jewish leaders functioned as both religious and civil leaders. The Romans were ultimately in charge and did whatever they found most expedient to keep rebellions down and taxes up. The Jewish leaders willingly did the bidding of the Romans to keep their place of power, but were also quite clever at trying to get the Romans to use their power to accomplish the Jewish leader’s goals:

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.” He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal’” (Luke 13:31–32, NIV).

Jesus had only these and a few other rebukes for the Romans, but it was the Jewish leaders whom He most frequently and severely condemned. Although both Christ and history show

that Herod Antipas deserved to be called “a fox”, he did not want to kill Jesus. It was the “religious” leaders, who should have known better, who wanted to kill Jesus. Why? Simply to preserve their political power.

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, “What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.” ...Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death (John 11:47–48, 53).

**The following is a chapter summary of the book of John**, emphasizing Jesus’ interactions with the people and government of His day. John frequently used the terms “Pharisees”, “chief priests” or simply “the Jews” to describe those who opposed Jesus. Unfortunately, many Christians have used this for the basis of being anti-Jewish. In truth, none of these groups were inherently bad: Paul was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), many priests eventually believed (Acts 6:7) and Jesus and nearly all of His followers were Jews. However, the **leaders** of these groups were, in general, bad. So, rather than name every corrupt individual and office, John refers to them in general terms, just like we might say today “our government is corrupt”. We do **not** mean that every last person in the government is bad or that all government is inherently evil—it is just characterized that way today.

So, the lesson of the book of John is not “to oppose Jews, priests and Pharisees”, but “to oppose **leaders** who resist good and do evil”. As you read this summary, please ask yourself if you would back a Christian leader who did similar things today.

### Chapter Summary of John:

1. Jesus asked 12 men to quit their jobs and follow Him without explaining how they or their families would be supported.
2. Jesus overturned money changers’ tables and drove merchants’ animals out of the temple. His only authority was Scripture. The government leaders knew this was against the Bible, but allowed it to go on. (Jesus did this again at the end of His ministry.)
3. Nicodemus, a government leader,

came to see Jesus by night and acknowledged that He was a teacher from God. (But the Jewish leaders never admitted it to the people. Should we be surprised if today's leaders secretly believe things that they will not admit openly?).

4. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans because of their false religion. Jesus affirms that Samaritans "worship what you do not know" (v 22), but shocked His disciples by teaching them anyway. (Would Jesus teach Moslems today? Would He try to visit some of the prisoners held without trial or charges?)
5. Jesus told a man to carry his bed on the Sabbath, contrary to the law (v 10), which was one of two things that made the government mad enough at Him to kill Him (v 18).
6. Jesus was so popular that the people wanted to make Him king (v 15), but then He said that believers "must eat My flesh and drink My blood" (v 54). Rather than ask Him what He meant by this apparently cannibal-like message, many followers deserted Him (v 60, 66).
7. Jesus said, "the world... hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil." People were afraid to openly talk about him for fear of the government (v 13). The leaders questioned Jesus' education (v 15). Jesus told them that they were not obeying the law and were seeking to kill Him (v 19). The leaders denied it and accused Him of demon possession. Others from Jerusalem leaked the secret plan to kill Him, creating confusion (vv 25–26). The rulers finally sent officers to arrest Him, but they did not carry out their order because of Christ's words. Those in the government who supported Jesus were threatened (vv 45–52).
8. The leaders tried to trap Jesus by bringing a woman caught in adultery to him. The Scriptures gave the death penalty for adultery, but the Romans did not allow the Jews to execute anyone. Whatever Jesus said, they thought they could get Him in trouble with the Romans or with the Scriptures. Jesus wrote on the *ground*—brilliantly avoiding saying something that others could testify about or writing a record that could be used against Him in court. Jesus

delivered the woman from an unjust trial where she would have been condemned without the man who was also involved. The leaders sought to kill Jesus again, and claimed that He was "born of fornication" and "has a demon". He told them that they are liars and "of their father, the devil".

9. Jesus healed a man who was born blind and the Jewish leaders put him out of the synagogue—a very bad stigma for those days, making it difficult to find a job and purchase goods and services. The leaders passed no law, but agreed among themselves to cast anyone out of the synagogue who would acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. The blind man's parents were successfully bullied by the government and declined to give credit to Christ for this miracle.
10. Jesus teaches he is the "good shepherd" who lays down his life for his sheep. Some leaders again accuse Him of demon possession and try to kill Him on two separate occasions (vv 20, 31, 39).
11. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and the council of leaders agreed they must kill Him to protect their government position. They order anyone who sees Him to report Him.
12. To discredit Jesus' miracle, the leaders plotted to kill Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. A huge crowd praised Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem. Even some of the leaders believed in Him, but were afraid to mention it openly lest they be put out of the synagogue, "for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (v 42–43).
- 13–17. Jesus explained His relationship with the Father, His love, the need for His death, the coming of the Holy Spirit and how His disciples will continue His work after He rejoins the Father. He warned that they will be hated and persecuted just like He was (15:18–20).
- 18–19. Judas, a former disciple of Jesus, knew the places where Jesus met and led the government leaders and troops there. Jesus was a victim of "police brutality", was not given due process, but was taken to a series of improperly convened courts and finally condemned by Pilate at the urging of a paid crowd who yelled "we have no king but Caesar".

Joseph of Arimathea was another disciple of Jesus who kept his discipleship secret for fear of the government.

20.–21 Jesus rose from the dead, spoke to His disciples several times and told them to continue on with HIS work.

This does not mean that anyone who opposes any government is following God. Indeed Paul taught that believers should obey rulers that "are not a terror to good works, but to evil" (Rom 13:3). A great many people rise up against governments for their own self-interest (Luke 13:1–2; Acts 5:36–37), and that is still happening today. We should not be one of them or follow them. But after reading the Gospel of John, hopefully every believer will realize that corrupt government leaders lie, kill and plot evil to keep themselves in power, and that Christ openly opposed them and disobeyed unjust laws and practices. While many of His followers lacked the Holy Spirit and the courage to publicly acknowledge Him for fear of the government, Christ taught:

"...whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8–9).

### What Did Peter Do?

When Peter saw the weight of government forces abusing Jesus and threatening Him with death, he felt the fear and did what so many of us would today, and pretended he did not know him. Before anyone today says "I wouldn't do that", think about this: Suppose you were driving to the house of a long-time friend whom you know to be a righteous and God-fearing person. As you got there, the street is blocked, an armed helicopter is hovering overhead, and numerous police and federal agents are brutally dragging your friend to a waiting truck, even though he is not resisting. If an officer came to your car and asked you what you were doing there, would you say, "I know this good man and there must be some mistake"? Or would you say, "I don't know him"?

"What do you think?" They answered and said, "He [Jesus] is deserving of death." Then they spat in His face and



beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophesy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?" Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are saying" (Matt 26:66–70).

Peter was indeed afraid of a powerful human government and went on to deny Christ three times. Even though he had witnessed Christ escape death many times in the past, and even though Christ had promised that he would have an important role in the future, Peter still feared for his life.

But Christ said that He prayed for Peter's strength, and with the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter spoke boldly in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. But the same government leaders who condemned Jesus were still there to oppose the Apostles. But the power of the Spirit of God made all the difference:

And when they [leaders] had brought them [the Apostles], they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "**We ought to obey God rather than men**" (Acts 5:27–29).

And... when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they [evil leaders] commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name**. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ (Acts 5:40–42).

Peter went on to do many great works in the name of Christ. He healed and taught many, but also received beatings and jail sentences at the hands of the government. The brethren were not embarrassed by their leaders being in jail, but prayed for their release and encouraged them to continue serving in spite of this persecution.

### What Did Paul Do?

When the early church began, the Apostle Paul was not the least bit

afraid of persecution—he was one of the greatest of the persecutors! But to show how our Father is able to accomplish His will in His Church, He simply struck Paul down with blindness and clearly showed him that He must serve Christ's Body whom he had been attacking. "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). Paul used his zeal for God and was thoroughly familiar with Christ's principle of self-sacrifice:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom 12:1–2).

The New Testament contains numerous stories of how Paul sacrificed to serve the Churches, preach the Gospel, take care of the poor and work his way through the rather corrupt legal systems of his day. Paul was familiar with his legal rights under Roman Law and frequently used them to his advantage, causing public officials to panic at times (Acts 16:37–39; 22:25–29; 28:19). When a group of 40 men conspired to kill Paul, he was actually protected by the Roman soldiers (Acts 23:12–24). But he also received ill treatment from the same system. The governor Felix left him in prison for two years, hoping to receive a bribe and as a political favor to the Jews (Acts 24:25–27). Paul certainly avoided co-operating with corrupt governments when he could. When soldiers were waiting for him to leave Damascus, he escaped from the city by being let down out of the wall in a basket (2Cor 11:32–33).

When Paul's apostleship was in question by some of the Corinthians, he did not go into a long doctrinal dissertation or give the number of people he had "saved" as a proof that he was a true servant of God. He expounded his sufferings for Christ:

Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received

from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea (2Cor 11:23–25, NIV)

The passage contains more than that. At the end of his ministry, when he was awaiting trial by Caesar, Paul expected to die at the hands of another corrupt government. He was content that he had lived his life well for Christ, but was sad that many other believers were afraid, and would not stand with him at his trial:

<sup>6</sup> For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. <sup>7</sup> **I have fought the good fight**, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. <sup>9</sup> Be diligent to come to me quickly; <sup>10</sup> for **Demas has forsaken me**, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup> Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. <sup>12</sup> And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus...

<sup>16</sup> **At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me**. May it not be charged against them. <sup>17</sup> **But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me**, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion (2Tim 4:6–12, 16–17)

### What Should We Do?

Christ told His Apostles:

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).

While we are not all called to be apostles, Christ still has a lot to say to all who follow Him:

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also **suffered the same things from your own countrymen**, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and **have**

persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, **forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved**, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost (1Thes 2:14–16).

<sup>12</sup>“But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name’s sake. <sup>13</sup>But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. <sup>14</sup>**Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer;** <sup>15</sup>for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. <sup>16</sup>You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and **they will put some of you to death.** <sup>17</sup>And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. <sup>18</sup>**But not a hair of your head shall be lost.** <sup>19</sup>By your patience possess your souls” (Luke 21:12–19).

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers (1Jn 3:16).

Christ’s message that we must be willing to lay down our lives for our brothers is very clear. Many Christian groups actually teach this—but it is usually understood in a sort of “spiritual, not-right-here, not-right-now way”. When I first read these parts of the Bible and imagined giving my life for Christ, I thought of a scene like: “A big military truck will come to our house with a picture of Satan or ‘the beast’ on the side and evil-looking uniformed men will ask us if we are Christians; we will stand firm and say ‘yes’ to the admiration of other Christians around us and maybe even the singing of angels; either the evil men will shoot us on the spot, or we will be protected by a divine miracle awing believer and infidel alike.”

But neither Jesus’ nor the Apostles’ lives or deaths were like that. Their enemies lied and worked hard to make their persecutions and executions look “legal”, “respectable”, even “a valuable service to public order and to God”. The results were messy. The Apostles were beaten up and spent a lot of time in jail before they died. Many of the brethren doubted which

side they should be on, and were not strong enough to stand up to the governments and did not support these Christians in their time of difficulty.

Today, it is hard for many Christians to think about personally intervening for believers who are being persecuted and killed by some of the “respectable” nations that sell us oil. It is hard for some Christians to help defend other believers who may be losing custody of their children because they homeschool them (Deut 6:7), spank them (Prov 13:24), or do not follow “accepted medical procedures”. (“Shouldn’t they just obey the government and give in if there are conflicts with their understanding of the Bible?”) It is similarly difficult for many believers to organize a local congregation directly under God (which was typical in the 1800s), because today almost all congregations are incorporated under the state and it seems the “respectable” thing to do. Also, if a Christian becomes aware of an evil crime committed by a government or large corporation today, should they do what they can to see that it is exposed and prosecuted to whatever ability our legal system is able to do it? Or is civil justice the exclusive realm of **unbelievers**?

The above paragraph gives just a few examples of situations where one might risk their life for Christ today. These are not by any means all or even the most important areas. This author is still studying the subject, and intends to follow it up with more study, and action.

Even now, it appears that there are seven helpful steps to understanding and obeying this vital Bible teaching:

1. Believe God and His Word over men and their word.
2. Recognize what we as Sabbatarians have done.
3. Recognize what others have done.
4. Respect and support those who are working now.
5. Do our share of the governing that has been given to us.
6. Commit to study.
7. Ask God to show you what to do, and do it.

### 1. Believe God and His Word over men and their word

This writer has been amazed at the ap-

proach that some brethren have toward man’s law versus God’s law. If these brethren find a scripture that seems to disagree with their understanding of what is right, they diligently check other related scriptures, translations, commentaries and Greek or Hebrew dictionaries to see if the scripture might be understood a different way. As long as one is not trying to force a meaning into the Bible that is not there, this method of study is good. It shows knowledge of how to study and a desire to know exactly what God meant when he inspired the scripture.

But these same brethren can be told by someone in government, “this is what the law says you have to do” and they feel they **must** do it without any further checking, even if it goes against their beliefs and judgment. They may not ask such very important questions as: Was the government person quoting a codified rule or were they just saying whatever they wanted? If it was a codified rule, was it a law passed by a legislature or was it simply an agency regulation which may not be a law at all? If it was a law, has it ever been tested in court? (Many laws are rejected as unconstitutional or invalid the first time there is an attempt to enforce them in court, but governments may continue acting as if the law exists unless they are challenged.) Is this law in conflict with the laws of God as taught in the Bible? And finally, who should we obey, God or men?

Now one’s initial reaction might be, “If you ask questions like that, people will think you are crazy and you are going to get in trouble.” Indeed, there are times when people fight over “crazy” issues that do not appear to matter to God or most people. But it is also true that the governments accused Christ and the Apostles of being crazy, and that they did get into trouble!

The previous section summarizing John noted how many times the Jewish government leaders plotted to kill Christ, but how they publicly denied it and accused Christ of “having a demon”. Notice how the same accusations were made against Peter and Paul:

So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?” Others mocking said, “**They are full of new**

wine." But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words" (Acts 2:12-13).

Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! **Much learning is driving you mad!**" But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason" (Acts 26:24-25).

While the Spirit of God is a Spirit of "power and of love and of a sound mind" (2Tim 1:7), it is not always so recognized by corrupt leaders seeking their own power. Most people in big Government and big business really believe a person is crazy to spend their life serving others—when they could spend it getting things for themselves.

On the other hand, there are some very good business and government leaders who stand for Christian principles and are trying to change the world for good. There are also **many teachers**, both secular and religious, who claim to have identified the cause of government and business corruption and will try to "tell you exactly who you can trust and who you cannot". While most of them have some truth, it seems that all too many are just too interested in selling their next book, magazine or tape—and not interested in discussing facts that disagree with their theories. But a few seem to be genuinely serving others in a Christ-like way.

The whole point of this section is we need to be ready to believe God instead of men, not to just believe different men. But we must recognize that there is a great tendency for humans, when they find problems, to trust them to a "higher level of government" for a solution. In other words, if we find corruption in our county government, we look to our state laws and courts to solve the problem. If there is a problem with a state, we look to national laws and courts to solve the problem. If there is a national problem, we look to an international committee or the United Nations to solve it. While solving local problems with people we know can be unpleasant, the solution is often better than when the problem is solved by somebody whom we do not know. People do not become more

righteous as they reach higher levels of government. If anything, "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

## 2. Recognize what we as Sabbatharians have done

After the first century, the Church was divided and much error had entered in. The writings of the "church fathers (200 to 500 A.D.) confirm an incredible variation in Church doctrine and practice. The Sabbath, Holy Days, eating clean meats, and many other true doctrines of the first century were lost to mainstream "Christianity". Some of these doctrines were maintained by the Ebionites, Waldenses and other smaller groups, but those groups have since departed. The Bible was copied, translated, published and distributed around the world almost exclusively by mainstream Christianity.

Many Sabbatarian groups have done a great service by studying, publishing and **living** these lost, but true doctrines. It is one thing for someone to read about keeping the Feasts in the Bible, it is much more valuable to go and see them being kept. **Doctrinal truth is a very important part of the Body of Christ.** It is a big part of the gift of "knowledge" described in 1 Corinthians 12:8. But Paul said "Knowledge puffs up" (1Cor 8:1). And indeed, many who have understood the Sabbath and other truths have been puffed up into thinking that only they are part of the true Church. How would the Sabbatarians understand any truth if it were not for those who preserved and translated the Bible and worked for freedom of religion?

The Seventh Day Adventists, Seventh Day Baptists and some Church of God groups also deserve credit for making "Sabbath keeping" and "Sunday working" a lot easier in many countries. Some governments literally fined or imprisoned people if a Sabbatarian's neighbors could hear or see them working on Sunday. These Sabbatarian groups also made progress in protecting Sabbatarians who were needlessly dismissed from jobs or schools because of their beliefs. They also dealt with military service and other important issues.

Current Sabbatarians, and all who will be Sabbatarians in the future, cer-

tainly benefit from this work that has been done in the past. While the prayers of believers and God's specific plans may or may not have been the main cause of the changes that made it easier to be a Sabbatarian, the fact remains that most of these benefits were implemented because of what a person or a church group actually did. In other words, there are precious few instances in modern history (the Bible records a very few) where a ruler or legislature simply declared that God had inspired them to pass a law making it easier for true believers. Almost always, such things came about as the result of someone who brought a court case, or someone who repeatedly violated a law until the authorities realized that no amount of punishment would stop this person from doing what they believe was right before God.

As an example, Arkansas had a law in the 1880s against Sunday work. Voters passed the law because its proponents claimed it would "close the bars" on Sunday, but no bar was ever prosecuted under the law. However, some Seventh Day Adventists were fined each Sunday that they worked, eventually having all their farm animals and possessions sold at auction to pay the "fines". Obviously, they would have been economically better off to not work on Sunday and avoid the fines. But they believed Americans should be free to keep the Sabbath and work on Sunday, so they did "lay down their lives" for their friends, and for Sabbatarians like us whom they did not know. It was not until the self-righteous leaders actually saw how they had destroyed the lives of otherwise "good Christian people" that they finally stopped prosecuting them and eventually abolished the laws (see [www.adventist4truth.com/Library/Pioneer/AT%20JonesNational%20Sunday%20Law.html](http://www.adventist4truth.com/Library/Pioneer/AT%20JonesNational%20Sunday%20Law.html))

## 3. Recognize what others have done

Most people today take for granted the Bible on their shelf and the freedom to read it. Contrast this with North Korea where "one class was given the assignment at school to go home and find a black book that their parents sometimes read. One girl returned the next day with her parents' Bible. When she got home, her parents were gone, and

she has not seen them in the decades since that day” (www.persecution.com).

For most of the centuries since Christ died, most people have had neither Bible nor the freedom to read and live by them. As with the Sabbatarian progress described above, religious freedom has not come by a group of people practicing the right doctrine, or even by a group of people quietly praying for it, and then suddenly a ruler grants freedom of religion “because God told him to”.

Freedom of religion has come about because some people wanted it so badly that they were going to obey God no matter what some government told them they should do. Sometimes, reasonable leaders recognized their determination and granted some or all of their requests. It worked this way in some European countries during the Protestant Reformation. Other Christians were resisted with the full force of the state and had to leave the comforts of their homeland and journey elsewhere to obey God and avoid being massacred. The history of religious freedom (and the lack of it) is very interesting, be it for the Americas, Europe or the rest of the world. It would be good for all of us to learn more about it, so we can value what we have, and maybe do something to stem the current trend of it gradually slipping away.

Thanks to the work of those who have gone before us, we face a better situation than did Christ and the Apostles. During their day, the highest human authority, Rome, was completely pagan, primarily interested in its own gods and wealth. Jewish leaders who were loyal to Rome were kept in power by the Romans. They had and taught the Bible, but with a mixture of their own tradition. The leaders did not “practice what they preached”, but ruled corruptly. The Romans were not interested in correcting unbiblical practices of Jewish leaders unless their own interests were threatened. All the average person of that day could directly do was to confront the bad leaders and hope to convince them from the Scriptures or moral arguments that they were wrong.

The United States of America was founded on the principles of the state recognizing and protecting the God-

given rights of man, but without sponsoring any state church or religion. Individual freedom was recognized, as long as it did not infringe on the freedoms of others. The Declaration of Independence recognizes God, **not the State**, as the Grantor of rights. The constitutions **of all 50 states** of the USA acknowledge God, most recognizing him as the source of rights and freedoms (see box on page 23). It has only been during that last century that laws and Supreme Court Decisions have tried to make the USA a godless nation.

The constitutions of the USA as well as other countries recognize **the people** as the ultimate source of power for human government—with all government officials being servants of the people. If the people recognize an unjust ruler or an unjust law, they have the right—actually the responsibility—to change it. While such a system is far from perfect, it certainly has provided better results than most monarchies and dictatorships. Like any kind of government, a democracy works much better when righteous, neighbor-serving, God-fearing people are running it. When people who are willing to “lay down their lives” for their brother abandon government and leave it to self-seeking men, then everyone begins to suffer.

Simply put, Christ and the Apostles had no rights or responsibilities in making the laws in the human governments of their day. They understood that system and worked within it when possible, against it when necessary. But today, most citizens of Western nations have the right to petition their government as soon as they are able to write a letter. They become legally responsible for their government when they come of voting age. By neglecting or poorly fulfilling their responsibility, they become partly responsible for the bad laws and leaders of the nation.

#### **4. Respect and support those who are working now.**

There are dozens of groups or individuals who are trying to replace our corrupt laws and leaders with those more in line with Bible teaching. Many are trying to help individuals victimized by such laws and leaders. (It was nice to see the article about sabbatarian

Royce Mitchell running for a position on the Texas Supreme Court, trying to help defeat the virtual monopoly that the Bar Association has on our legal system—see *The Journal, News of the Churches of God*, February 2002.)

Hopefully, the purpose of these people is **not** to use the state to enforce a religious denomination or belief on anyone, but to simply fix unjust laws in the way that God describes as good, and that even unbelievers can understand. For example, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness should be recognized for pre-born babies. People who kill them (when they are not threatening the life of the mother) should be treated as murderers. Other laws governing children, parents, theft, perjury, kidnapping are all often far away from what the Bible teaches and everyone would be a lot better off if they were changed. It is the job of the Christian preachers and teachers to show all citizens why God’s laws are for our good. It is the job of all the citizens to make these laws their national laws as they understand them.

A past example of such a change is the “abolitionist” movement, largely pushed by church groups. It eventually resulted in voting in the Constitution’s 13th amendment which limited slavery to convicted criminals. This article cannot begin to cover all of the laws, practices and needy people that a believer today might want to help change. But much information is available on the Internet or even in the Yellow Pages.

Since Sabbatarians tend to be considered on the “fringe” of organized religion, the freedom of religion issue should be very important to them. While religious freedom in general continued to increase in western countries from the 1300s to the 1800s, it may now be on a reverse path. Today, governments are bigger and collect more information about their citizens than ever before. They use a myriad of computers, forms, ID numbers, satellites and “intelligence agencies”. Some governments are now using computerized facial scanners that look for the faces of “wanted” people if they happen to walk the streets.

If governments use these capabilities only to prosecute real criminals,

then it is wonderful. But there have already been ample cases where government leaders have used the IRS, FBI, CIA and other agencies to harass political opponents. If the Apostle Paul were here today and someone was let down from a wall in a basket to escape searching soldiers, would he be discovered by a satellite or a hidden camera and immediately apprehended? Yes, God would still provide for him, but our freedom is dwindling. Are we wise when we trust a government with all information about everyone and little accountability about how they use it?

Governments continue to increase their direct monitoring of religious groups as well. Part of this is achieved by convincing the church groups to accept government benefits along with government control. Incorporating churches, asking for tax-exempt documentation, accepting college grants, participating in government aid programs are some of the ways where church groups get money or benefits and the government obtains a partial degree of control. For example, churches that have obtained 501(c)3 status from the IRS have agreed not to be involved in activities that attempt to influence legislation or candidates for public office. They have agreed not to publish an article like this one. Similarly, if Jesus and the Apostles could have asked for a 501(c)3 exemption back then, they could have been justly punished for openly condemning the unjust laws of the Pharisees.

While it is obvious that governments need a way to deal with citizens who falsely masquerade as a "religion" when they are not, the methods governments use are not changing. In the past, they would most often prosecute an individual who claimed to be part of a church, but who was actually running a business. Lately, there has been an increased tendency for governments to regulate religion directly and decide what is and what is not a church.

In the year 2000, France became the first major nation to pass a specific anti-cult law. It allows for the government to accuse a church organization of a crime. The law makes it a crime for organizations to apply heavy pressure techniques or make "fraudulent abuse of a state of ignorance or weakness". An organization found guilty

can be fined all the money it has, or shut down completely. The French government has moved to shut down the Church of Scientology under this law. While this church group indeed does harass former members and appears to do as much business as it does religion, it is still a little ominous to see a modern Western nation shut down a church group in an entire country. Some of the abusive practices of the Church of God groups would likely be prosecutable under this law. While some might say, "what a blessing", do we really want governments to get in the habit of terminating religions that they disagree with? How easy will it become for several government "expert witnesses" to testify that a religion is abusive, and then to have a few jurors, knowing little about the religion, side with the "experts" and shut the religion down.

In addition to this, the French government acknowledged it has a list of 173 religious groups which are "under permanent government surveillance". These include nearly all groups that believe in a literal return of Christ.

While this is only for one country, there is a tendency for these kinds of laws, if unopposed, to spread from one country to another. There are many organizations that attempt to monitor and encourage Freedom of religion. Some of their web sites are:

International Coalition for Religious Freedom (has info on every country):  
[www.religiousfreedom.com](http://www.religiousfreedom.com)

Center for Religious Freedom:  
[www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)

Voice of the Martyrs: [www.vom.org](http://www.vom.org)

Any Christian, no matter what doctrine they believe, must appreciate all the work that has been done and all the others who have "laid down their lives" to produce the religious freedom that we have.

### 5. Do our share of the governing that has been given to us

Christ puts a variety of spiritual gifts in the church. We cannot all "lay down our lives" for our brethren in the same way. One believer may primarily teach the Bible, another may primarily help the poor, another may visit those in prison and try to help them out.

But in nations where the responsi-

bility for governing falls on all citizens, any believer who chooses not to vote is essentially saying "I cannot make any better decision than the average member of my nation." No other member of the Church—no matter how gifted in government he may be—can vote for another believer. But if the believer does not have enough knowledge to know who to vote for, he or she can fulfill their responsibility by simply finding that "gifted in government" believer and voting for whom he suggests. If a nation has 100 million voters, is not each believer 1/100,000,000th responsible for the laws and elected people of that country?

Please realize that by voting, this writer is not suggesting that one take the classic "I do something for you, you do something for me" approach to politics. Many people simply vote for "their party" or for whatever candidate will promise to do the most for them.

Nevertheless, there are many reasons that brethren give for not voting. Those reasons are listed below, with simple refutations:

**a. We cannot solve the world's problems now, only at the return of Christ, so why try?** Few believers use this logic on their own personal needs. If they are hurt, they get help; if they are hungry, they look for food; if they are poor, they look for a job. They do not wait for Christ to return and solve their problems. They do not solve them perfectly, but it is better than doing nothing. We have religious freedom because men and women followed Christ's teaching to lay down their lives for others, not because He literally returned. Who can prove that Christ will **not** continue to do good things through His believers, now and in the future?

**b. Prayer is much more powerful than voting, so we should just pray about elections.** The difficulty with this argument can be illustrated by a meeting of 90 people in a town hall that is voting on whether to allow a gambling hall to be built. There are 20 Christians who are against it, and 70 other people who are for it to one degree or another. In the meeting the Christians effectively show the evils that gambling tends to bring to small towns and they convince 30 people to

vote against it. But when the vote is taken, the 20 Christians pray, the 30 people vote against it, the 40 others vote for it, and the gambling hall is built. And these Christians got what they deserved. Should we ever pray for someone else to do something that we refuse to do ourselves?

**c. If a Christian voted for the person whom God did not want, he would be voting against God.** This is little different to when one gives money to a charity and then later finds doctrinal or other difficulties with it. One is disappointed at the loss of money and one's own misunderstanding, but neither one of these kinds of mistakes will stop God's purpose.

**d. If Christians vote, they could end up voting on opposite sides of an issue. Would it not appear that Christ is divided?** Christians already are on opposite sides of many issues. One group makes a booklet on a certain doctrine, and another group makes a booklet refuting it. The solution to these situations is **not** "to stop studying doctrine and stop voting". The solution is for Christians to do the best they can now and then to listen and learn from each other.

**e. "Voting is not in the Bible."** Actually, a good case can be made to show voting in the Bible, but rather than include a long explanation of Greek words here, we can see that God utterly commanded all the people of a nation to form local governments (Deut 16:18) and the brethren in congregations to choose people to take care of needs in their local congregations (Acts 6:3). The only way a **group** of people can make a decision is with some manner of voting. There is no scripture that condemns voting.

**f. It does not pay to vote because the poles are rigged.** If one has absolute proof that voting is being controlled by outside parties, then one should lay down one's life and expose this evil to put government back in the hands of the people. If one cannot prove it, then one should continue to vote. A rigged voting system is more likely to be discovered if righteous people are using it than if they have abandoned it.

**g. How do I vote if no candidate is acceptable?** It is indeed difficult to vote for a person whom one believes to

be dishonest or unjust. Many elections have two candidates running who match that description well. But there are also lesser-known candidates running for most elections. The Constitution Party and the Libertarian Party believe in gradually getting rid of most big government. In most cases, that would be better than what we have now. If nothing else, the more people who vote for candidates who are not traditional Democrats or Republicans, the more others will consider those alternatives. If all the people who normally skip elections would vote for a non-traditional candidate, our entire country's leadership would change in a few years. A non-traditional vote says "I do not want the major candidates", which is much better than not voting which says "I do not care what happens, I want no influence whatever."

When one looks at the histories of local, state and national elections, it is possible to see a lot of good ideas that came to pass because Christians voted for them. It is also possible to see many bad things that happened because not enough Christians voted.

## 6. Commit to study

Laying down our lives for others is a big issue—something not discussed by many Church of God groups. While it is possible to jump right in and try to begin doing this today, it is probably better to study the issue first—something that Church of God members are good at. There are many ways that a believer could usefully "lay down his life for his brethren". There are also many phony programs in existence; they claim to be doing good, but are primarily designed to make money for somebody. But there are also worthwhile methods of service. Some are very small—run by a few individuals; others may be large—involving big organizations and governments.

One example, which this author knew nothing about until researching this article, is a proposed amendment to the Constitution called "The Religious Freedom Amendment:

To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience: Neither the United States nor any State shall establish any official religion, but the people's right to pray and to recognize their religious

beliefs, heritage, or traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed. Neither the United States nor any State shall require any person to join in prayer or other religious activity, prescribe school prayers, discriminate against religion, or deny equal access to a benefit on account of religion.

This amendment seems to capture the original intent of the Constitution. It allows prayer in schools and other public places, but states that no one should be forced to participate. It was approved by a subcommittee in 1997, but has not passed the votes needed to cause it to be submitted to the States. Would a few thousand more Christians writing letters about this to their congressmen make a difference? More information is available at:

<http://religiousfreedom.house.gov>

## 7. Ask God to show you what to do, and do it

The need for believers to be willing to lay down their lives for their brethren is clearly found in the Bible. The benefits from believers who laid down their lives to bring us religious freedom, the Bible, etc. can be clearly seen.

Knowing what we can do to help is not too difficult, it requires only a little study. We can easily find more that needs to be done than we can do in our lifetime.

Knowing exactly what God wants us to do may not be as easy. But we should not undertake anything that is not of God. There are many possibilities. What shall we do? Shall we work alone or in groups? Should it be a local group or a national group? How much time should we devote to Bible study and teaching others, and how much should we devote to serving others? These are questions I hope to answer for myself, and I hope you will answer them for yourself. When one has lived in a "wait for Christ to return to solve everything" mentality for many years, it is hard to think about what Christ might really expect out of us today. Brethren can be a great encouragement to each other when they work together. We can take time to do this right, but we cannot take forever:

John 9:4 "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the

*Continued on page 30*

# God Mentioned in the Constitutions of All 50 States of the Union

|                |   |                 |   |
|----------------|---|-----------------|---|
| Alabama:       | "invoking the favor and guidance of Almighty God"   | Minnesota:      | "grateful to God for our civil and religious liberty"   |
| Alaska:        | "grateful to God and to those who founded our nation... in order to secure and transmit succeeding generations our heritage of political, civil, and religious liberty"   | Mississippi:    | "grateful to Almighty God, and invoking blessings of freedom"   |
| Arizona:       | "grateful to Almighty God for our liberties"  | Missouri:       | "with profound reverence for the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and grateful for His goodness"  |
| Arkansas:      | "grateful to Almighty God for the privilege of choosing our own form of government, for our civil and religious liberty"  | Montana:        | "grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of liberty"   |
| California:    | "grateful to Almighty God for our freedom"  | Nebraska:       | "grateful to Almighty God for our freedom"  |
| Colorado:      | "with profound reverence for the Supreme Ruler of the Universe"   | Nevada:         | "Grateful to Almighty God for our freedom in order to secure its blessings"   |
| Connecticut:   | "acknowledge with gratitude, the good providence of God"  | New Hampshire:  | "unalienable right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience"  |
| Delaware:      | "Through Divine goodness, all men have by nature the rights of worshipping and serving their Creator according to the dictates of their own conscience"   | New Jersey:     | "grateful to Almighty God for the civil and religious liberty which He hath so long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for a blessing upon our endeavors to secure..." |
| Florida:       | "being grateful to Almighty God for our constitutional liberty"   | New Mexico:     | "grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of liberty"   |
| Georgia:       | "relying upon the protections and guidance of Almighty God"   | New York:       | "grateful to Almighty God for our Freedom"  |
| Hawaii:        | "grateful for Divine Guidance"  | North Carolina: | "grateful to Almighty God, the Sovereign Ruler of Nations"  |
| Idaho:         | "grateful to Almighty God for our freedom"  | North Dakota:   | "grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of civil and religious liberty"   |
| Illinois:      | "grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political and religious liberty which He has permitted us to enjoy and seeking His blessing upon our endeavors"  | Ohio:           | "grateful to Almighty God for our freedom"  |
| Indiana:       | "grateful to Almighty God for the free exercise of the right to choose our own government"  | Oklahoma:       | "Invoking the guidance of Almighty God"   |
| Iowa:          | "grateful to the Supreme Being for the blessings hitherto enjoyed, and feeling our dependence on Him for a continuation of those blessings"   | Oregon:         | "to worship Almighty God"   |
| Kansas:        | "grateful to Almighty God for our civic and religious privileges"   | Pennsylvania:   | "grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of civil and religious liberty, and humbly invoking His guidance"   |
| Kentucky:      | "grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political, and religious liberties we enjoy"   | Rhode Island:   | "grateful to Almighty God for the civil and religious liberty which He hath so long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for a blessing upon our endeavors"              |
| Louisiana:     | "grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political, economic, and religious liberties we enjoy"   | South Carolina: | "grateful to God for our liberties"   |
| Maine:         | "acknowledging with grateful hearts the goodness of the Sovereign Ruler of the universe in affording us an opportunity, so favorable to the design; and imploring God's aid and direction in its accomplishments, do agree" | South Dakota:   | "grateful to Almighty God for our civil and religious liberties"  |
| Maryland:      | "grateful to Almighty God for our civil and religious liberty"  | Texas:          | "Humbly invoking the blessings of Almighty God"   |
| Massachusetts: | "acknowledging with grateful hearts, the goodness of the great Legislator of the Universe, in affording us, in the course of His providence, and opportunity"   | Tennessee:      | "to worship Almighty God"   |
| Michigan:      | "grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of freedom"   | Utah:           | "Grateful to Almighty God for life and liberty"   |
|                |   | Vermont:        | "to worship Almighty God"   |
|                |   | Virginia:       | "...duty which we owe to our Creator... mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity"  |
|                |   | Washington:     | "grateful to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe for our liberties"   |
|                |   | West Virginia:  | "Since through Divine Providence we enjoy the blessings of civil, political and religious liberty... reaffirm our faith in and constant reliance upon God..."                 |
|                |   | Wisconsin:      | "grateful to Almighty God for our freedom"  |
|                |   | Wyoming:        | "grateful to God for our civil, political, and religious liberties"   |

**“Two Pictures of Our Need for Christ” from page 1**

Salvation is a process of delivering us from the world, Satan, and self. It's a process of the old man's death, and the new creature in Christ growing into a mature thinking and acting individual, just as our Messiah was and is (Eph 4:13). The apostle Paul's determined goal for all those whom he ministered to, was given for our reference in Galatians 4:19, “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.” This central theme of the reformation process is summarized in 2Cor 3:18, and is specifically emphasized in 2Cor 4:11; “For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

Now the principle of **life out of death** is pictured both in our public baptism and the Christian Passover service.

Let us first briefly review the need for a Savior to deliver us from ourselves and the evil that exists in this world. Adam and Eve's wrong choice resulted in mankind's separation from God, pictured by removing them from the Garden and thereby barring them from the Tree of Life. In order for reconciliation to come about, God the Father had to first propose deliverance—salvation. Secondly, the beloved Son had to purchase it. And finally, God's Holy Spirit has to apply it. The first two steps have been accomplished, and the third is in active process.

There is no amount of good works we can do to earn salvation. Our part is not production, but reception of our life “in Christ Jesus”, who is our salvation. However, our efforts are involved here as this entails Bible based fact-finding, and explicit faith in Him and His purpose for us “in Christ”. It also involves our patient **trust** as He takes us through the necessary purification process involved (Tit 2:11–14).

As God's calling continues to go out, the people have a **choice** to make, not unlike Adam and Eve's choice. Many factors can affect the response: love of the world and the things that

are in it; strong self-will; rebellious natures; procrastination, etc. (I remember a friend telling me that it took him 18 years from his calling to make a firm commitment before being baptized. Praise God, he did make it.)

Even after we have made the correct choice of Life, I don't think most have a very deep understanding of the life-out-of-death process that we have entered into with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This usually comes later on with our child-training.

Submitting to **water baptism** is to be a testimony, or giving evidence that we have accepted the facts of

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**Baptism need be done  
only one time in  
one's life—at an age  
when one is old  
enough for a life-long  
adult commitment.  
It also testifies to our  
position; we have  
died to—out of the  
power of—the old life  
and are alive in the  
newness of life**

---

Scripture, and acknowledge our need for a Savior in order to be reconciled back to God. We therefore reckon, or count ourselves to have been placed in union with Jesus Christ, by the Spirit (Rom 6:1–11). Baptism need be done only one time in one's life—at an age when one is old enough for a life-long adult commitment. It also testifies to our position; we have died to—out of the power of—the old life and are alive in the newness of life.

Our “position” is not a place, but is a person with a personality. Sometimes we have difficulty grasping this concept. Making a comparison with our human birth might help here. When we were born into this world, we automatically inherited the characteristics of our forefathers clear back to the beginning of time. We inherited a deep self-centered nature that is prone to sin. We didn't have

any choice in the matter. We were therefore “positioned” with Adam's nature—our flesh—which is simply not compatible with God's nature (Rom 3:23; 7:18; 8:7).

When we are immersed into the water, our old man is as a dead man, crucified and its power over us is broken. As we come out of the water, we have entered into the newness of life. This is our new position, “in Christ” and the old man has no power over the new man in Christ. Remember when Jesus was nailed up to the stake, and He was up there crucified for a period of time before He finally died. This is where our old man has been placed—up on the stake with Jesus, crucified, power broken, but not yet annihilated.

There is an allegory which has been given to me by another, and it might help clarify this situation: there is a ship on a voyage and the captain has been tried and found guilty of a capital offense, and as such has been put below deck in the ship's jail. The new captain of our ship gives good guidance and steers a true course along safe harbors. Meanwhile the old captain continues to loudly claim he is the rightful leader of the ship, and the crew are so used to listening to him that they still sometimes do—which causes a lot of problems for the ship. Explanation: We are the ship on our voyage of life. Our old man is the old captain who has been put in chains, and his power over us is broken at our baptism. He will be permanently removed from our ship when the ship reaches the final port, but he still causes a lot of problems in the meantime. The new captain of our ship is, of course, Jesus Christ.

This brings us to the Christian Passover/Lord's Supper connection and the reason why we need to partake of it as an annual memorial, rather than a one-time experience such as with our baptism.

When we come up out of the water we have entered into a brand new life, separate from the old. It is the life of Christ—He is our life (Col 3:4). We have been positioned in Him by the Father. However, we come into Jesus' life as newborn spiritual

*Continued on page 31*





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.

## Not Worried About Past Tithes

**LETTER:** November 22, 2001  
Dear Mr. Edwards,

My husband Norman died July 13 of this year. But aside from that, I have noticed how some people are still talking on about past tithes they gave to WCG. We were long time members of WCG, and haven't been now for over 10 years. Before Norman died we talked a lot about our past and what we learned from it. Neither of us had ever regretted the years, or what we learned or tithed. We felt God called us, to learn what He wanted to teach us. And we saw nothing wrong until we had learned enough to follow Him. Then we slowly started seeing the wrongs and then quit.

But we both thought that's why we didn't have any mind problems. We just kept reading, learning and following God. Oh we have changed our views on some things, but not without prayer and searching. And the tithes, we gave to God's work in faith, with prayer and thanksgiving—have no regrets there either.

I just thank God daily for bringing us to Him in whatever means He used. And now onward. Yes I lost my greatest joy to God, but what I've learned from Norman through God, I will always have. And no, my husband had nothing to leave me, but again because of God's work through him, our children take very good care of me. Please keep sending future *Servants' News* to me. I need all the reading I can get, God isn't done with me yet!

May God Bless all of you

— Jackie Firestone, Montana

**RESPONSE:** I agree with you. I never felt bad at the more than 10% that I gave to the WCG for about 14 years. I did it in faith. I did what I believed God required of me, and that is a good thing to do. I know that at least some of the money was used to do some good for some people.

I can guess, but cannot possibly know what would have happened if I would

have done something different.

— NSE

## Plagiarism in the UCG-BI?

**LETTER:** November 8, 2001  
Dear Mr. Edwards,

I understand you have some knowledge of plagiarism and wonder if you can advise me.

I have been trying to confirm that a *World Tomorrow* broadcast which quotes extensively from old *Plain Truth* articles constitutes plagiarism. I have raised the issues with the National Council of the United Church of God—British Isles, but the CEO asserts that it is not plagiarism.

I also believe, but have no proof, that another part of the same broadcast has been “lifted” from an encyclopedia but have not been able to trace the source.

I do have a transcript of the programme, which I have made myself. The original broadcast is available on the UCG-BI web site—details attached.

Yours sincerely,

— Barbara Fenney, United Kingdom

**RESPONSE:** Thank you for your letter about the United Church of God—British Isles. I have some knowledge of plagiarism in the United States, but internationally is a completely different matter.

In general, plagiarism was not even considered a crime until the age of printing. Before printing, anyone who was a skilled copiest could make money by copying and selling a book—he would not make more money by pretending it was his own work and the real author was usually glad that someone was copying his book. But today, in some countries, making 10,000 copies of a book often costs less than the writing and research for a good book. Plagiarism laws vary greatly from one country to the next, based upon their tradition of printing and their social and political

ideas about protecting “intellectual property”. Some less-developed countries still do not have plagiarism laws. Some communist countries have almost no copyright protection—from the false idea that everything belongs to the state and the state belongs to everybody. Some countries are good about recognizing their own copyrights, but not as good about recognizing the copyrights of other nations.

Obviously, Britain is neither less-developed nor communist, but copying old magazine articles from another country may not constitute legal plagiarism there. I do not know. But even if it is legal, is it not **deceitful** for them to use somebody else's work as if it were their own? Probably so—but it is a deception used by nearly every church organization that claims to be the “one true church”. Most such groups fail to acknowledge that they could not be doing their work if it was not for other groups that copied and translated the Scriptures. Most fail to acknowledge that they use Bible helps and commentaries by men from other denominations. And as in your case, they apparently failed to acknowledge when they are reading someone else's material.

Just looking at the list of broadcast titles at [www.goodnews.org.uk/audio](http://www.goodnews.org.uk/audio), there are some new ones about current issues, but many are identical or similar to previous Worldwide Church of God titles. The same prophetic flavor maintained by the WCG in the 1950s through to the 1970s remains: *Cracking Open The Apocalypse*; *The Urgency of the Times!*; *Apocalypse USA—Behind the Atrocity*; *Armageddon—What Does It mean?*; *Britain In Prophecy (Parts 1 & 2)*; *Condition Critical*; etc.

To me, the plagiarism issue that you mentioned is important, but the overall direction of the UCG's work is crucial. In a few hours they could rewrite, in their own words, the WCG booklet or

the encyclopedia article that you mentioned. That would avoid any problems with legal plagiarism. The difficulty is that they are continuing to preach the same message: "Bible prophecy states that the world is about to destroy itself and Christ must return in our lifetime". We must realize that the WCG (and the Radio Church of God before it) preached that message in the 1930s, 40s and 50s and most of the people who heard it are now dead—never seeing it come to pass. Many other Adventist groups preached a similar message before the WCG and RCG. Each dogmatically stated that "they were living in the time of the end".

Can God hold the world today responsible for refusing to listen to this prophetic message that has been preached for decades and not come to pass? Can any objective person really believe that a just God preached "His warning to the world" through the "one true church", the WCG, but that warning was a whole generation early and now the real warning is coming through a whole bunch of little "one true churches" that preach the same thing, but can't get along with each other?

The UCG is teaching a lot of sound Bible truth. If they (and the other groups) could properly present themselves as one of many groups serving God, they would not have to copy the works of others in an effort to pretend that they have the answer to everything. They could do what they do well, and refer readers to other groups that also have good teaching in other areas. May God give all of us wisdom to better serve Him.

— NSE

## Farming and the Sabbath

### LETTER:

August 28, 2001

Dear Norman,

At the end of an article of yours, you quote 1Cor 7:23: "You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men". That was an eye-opening statement as so many have been just that, slaves of men for so many years and still to this day.

This, however, is not what was on my mind at the moment. A certain problem that has existed for many years for some of us in the churches of God has never been addressed properly or not at all in the many years we have been associated with a church. (We are no longer with any church of men. Have a deep and abiding love of God and Jesus Christ.)

Many of us have been or are still farmers. Along with this are the many hours milking cows, feeding, watering, taking care of orphans, scrubbing milk machines, and other chores too numerous to mention. In the old Worldwide Church some even taught that the cows should not be milked on the Sabbath. (What a disaster!!!) (This from "citized" ministers knowing nothing about farming.)

Some taught that there should not be that big of an operation. Have only one or two cows. Could anyone make a living with one or two cows? From where would the milk come from for the many people living in the cities? The butter, the eggs, the cream and the ice cream...?

In the Bible, Abraham had many cattle. His, however, must have been more the beef type that just graze and have only enough milk for the calves.

Some people have criticized others for doing a little more than milk cows on the Sabbath while they themselves spend two hours or more in the barn twice a day on the Sabbath, which is about 4 to 6 hours of hard physical labor.

I guess that what I would like is your thoughts on this problem that for most farmers does not go away. Keeping the Sabbath certainly has to be different for different people. Just going to a building and sitting there in a row listening to another person funneling information about what they know is not "keeping the Sabbath" as far as I can see. Keeping the Feast days are another thing with the same format. Here again it is just men standing in front of people funneling in their information and their thoughts about what they think the Bible says.

Why do some people think they have so much more knowledge about what the Bible says when anyone can read it for oneself? I don't think God meant for it to be so difficult.

Freedom in Christ is exactly what it says. It really boils down to everyone working out their own salvation. One between the person and God and Jesus Christ. Not allowing oneself to be a slave of men is a good one.

Now back to the cows... Any good, helpful thoughts??? I certainly want this to be a private letter and answer... in other words not to be published in the *Servants' News*, etc.

— Wisconsin

**RESPONSE:** Your quote about not being slaves of men relates to how a farmer should keep the Sabbath. Many Sabbath-keeping groups have written huge amounts of detail about how to keep the Sabbath—the Jews lead the pack. While

some of it is certainly helpful, I am convinced that a lot of it makes the Sabbath a burden rather than a delight. I am enclosing my tract entitled *Scriptures about the Sabbath*, which covers most of the scriptures in the Bible about the Sabbath. It is amazing how relatively few verses there are.

We are accountable to God to keep the Sabbath. "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom 14:12). He tells us not to work (Ex 20:9) or do our own pleasure (Is 58:13). He tells us not to work our animals (Ex 20:10). It is all right to feed animals (Luke 13:15), and tend to unusual or unexpected conditions on the Sabbath (Luke 14:6, John 5:9). It is commanded that we assemble on the Sabbath (Lev 23:1–2) and the Holy Days (rest of Leviticus 23). God will know whether a farmer is trying to do these things or whether he is trying to use his farm to avoid obeying Him.

I believe it is a great mistake for preachers to insist that Sabbatarians live a certain way, and then live a lifestyle that is not compatible with that way. For example, if a preacher declares that Sabbatarian farmers should have only one or two cows, then he should also declare that Sabbatarians try to get their milk from a farmer with only one or two cows. (It would have to be a local farmer as no dairy could profitably pick up milk from a farm with two cows.) Similarly, if a preacher declares that no Sabbatarian should be in the dairy business because it is impossible to keep the Sabbath, then they should declare that no Sabbatarian should drink milk because producing it requires the breaking of the Sabbath.

I think each farmer can figure out how best to limit their Sabbath work to that which must be done for the sake of the animals. I know of some who milk Friday afternoon, and then Saturday after dark, but I do not know that all can do that. I did this when I had milk goats. Goats were fairly flexible and could wait a number of hours to be milked. It is possible that there are (or were) some breeds of cattle that were more flexible in their milking requirements, but they probably do not produce the huge quantities of milk that modern cows do. Is it possible that there are some that do not need to be milked at all one day in seven? I do not know. But it will be **farmers** who should find or produce such a breed and raise

and milk them. Preachers cannot preach such cows into existence.

Both Leviticus 23:1–2 and Hebrews 10:25 indicate that we should continue assembling together. The purpose is to encourage each other, learn from each other, and share our spiritual gifts. However, I can understand not wanting to attend a service that consists primarily of men just lecturing people and funneling what they think they know. That is why the New Testament teaching is primarily questions and answers, not just long sermons. You should find a place where you can contribute your spiritual gifts as well as benefit from others. That can be in a “church building”, or with a few other believers at home.

— NSE

## The Faith Once Delivered

**LETTER:** December 4, 2001

Regarding “e-mail subs” on Page 2, I would take Option 3. This would save you time and money. I would still be able to access and/or print it out much cheaper.

Looking forward to delving into your paper: “Starting a Local Congregation”.

Norm, I would appreciate your input on a subject of concern: In your opinion, does the term “faith once delivered” refer to Mr. Armstrong’s work, or does it refer to Christ’s teaching?

Hope this finds you all well.

— Colorado

**RESPONSE:** I will begin sending you an e-mail link.

Your question is obviously referring to Jude 1:3:

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints**” (KJV).

The word “saints” is used about 95 times in the New Testament and always refers to all of the believers—or all of them in a specific geographical area. While it does mean “holy ones” or “set apart ones” the Bible says nothing about a subclass of people **who are believers** but somehow not good enough to be “saints”. Paul addresses one of his letters: “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all

who in every place **call on the name of Jesus Christ** our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1Cor 1:2). Yet Paul goes on to mention numerous sins and problems among those Corinthian saints.

Now that we know who the saints are, we can see the the book of Jude is clearly talking about the message that was once taught to many saints by Christ, His Apostles, evangelists and other teachers. Jude was certainly writing this letter to real people who were alive at his time, but affected by false teaching (see verse 4) and in need of “contending for the faith”. There is no hint that Jude is prophesying some event 1,900 years into the future. Nevertheless, many Bible stories and prophecies will apply to multiple times throughout history. Today, could this scripture mean that believers should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the twentieth century saints by Herbert Armstrong?

This is a fair question. Let us compare the sources of what was delivered to the saints, both in the first century and the twentieth century.

The saints of the first century were taught primarily by the Apostles. When Judas was replaced, the Apostles chose another who had been with Christ from the beginning (Acts 1:21–22). Paul was taught directly by Christ (Gal 1:11–16). In his writings, Paul sometimes makes clear when he is giving a command he heard directly from Christ (“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord...”—1Cor 7:10), and when he is using his own understanding (“But to the rest I, not the Lord, say...”—1Cor 7:12).

By contrast, how was Herbert Armstrong taught? He never claimed any direct revelation from Christ—neither visions nor dreams nor face to face meetings. Many times he stated that he was taught by the written Word of God, rather than the spoken Word, and frequently mentioned his intensive 6-month study of the Bible. Of interest, that is about one seventh of the time that the Apostles spent with Jesus. But that is not necessarily a factor, God is capable of making a man who can learn seven times faster. The question to answer is this: Was Herbert Armstrong’s study equivalent to the Apostles learning from Christ?

I think the answer is “No” for five important reasons:

1. The Word that taught Mr. Arm-

strong was much different than the Word who taught the Apostles. The Apostles understood Christ’s language perfectly and could ask questions if they did not. Herbert Armstrong was not reading the words of Christ and the Apostles, but a version of their words after 1,900 years of copying and translation. He relied on commentaries, lexicons and other Bible helps to gather a better understanding of the original meaning of the writers. He certainly learned a lot from this, but it was far from the abilities of the original Apostles. For example, Mr. Armstrong rightly rejected the long-standing Christian tradition and KJV’s erroneous translation of “pascha” to “Easter” in Acts 12:4, but till the day of his death, he maintained the erroneous practice of having separate offices of “deacon” and “minister” in his congregation. These separate words were written into the KJV Bible because the church of England had two separate offices—the Greek Scriptures contain only one word for both of them, “diakonos”. There are many other examples of Bible translation errors that Herbert Armstrong DID and DID NOT find in the Bible. He never claimed nor apparently had any divine revelation of the precise meaning of the original language texts. He studied to the best of his ability, just like you, I and many other Bible teachers.

2. Mr. Armstrong changed his doctrines as he went along, whereas the Apostles did not. The New Testament contains no example where the Apostles stated that Christ taught them one thing, then later taught them something different. Whereas HWA changed his teaching on several major doctrines. His teaching on church government reversed from his 1939 to his 1974 article. He observed Pentecost by three different methods. He once taught married believers to split up if either had been previously married to someone still alive—then later reversed that teaching. He reversed himself on the wearing of make-up several times. He set numerous ranges of years for the return of Christ, all failed. It is very good that a person corrects themselves when they find errors in their teaching—Mr. Armstrong should have done it and we should do it. However, it is difficult to believe that Mr. Armstrong had some special divine teaching of Christ when he had to make corrections throughout his ministry. His pattern of teaching is more

like the pattern of many other teachers: sometimes he diligently sought God and the Bible and God taught him truth; other times he answered questions without adequate prayer and study, and gave answers that he later had to change.

3. Mr. Armstrong borrowed some of his teaching from others. He taught that the United States and Britain were Israel, but borrowed much of the content of his works from J. H. Allen's book on the subject. He copied the entire booklet "Has Time Been Lost?" from the Church of God Seventh Day. His explanation of the Day of Atonement goats (Lev 16) is the same as a vision of Ellen G. White, founder of the Seventh Day Adventists. All of these sources clearly existed before his study into the Bible. There is nothing wrong with learning from the writings of others that teach truth. We should all do it. But we should not ascribe God's revelation of truth to one man when God has revealed it through many people.

4. Mr. Armstrong did not have the signs and wonders that the Bible speaks of as the identifying signs of an Apostle (Acts 2:43, Acts 5:12; 2Cor 12:12). While he claims a number of miracles in his autobiography, these all occurred before he called himself an Apostle. Indeed, this writer attended the same local congregation as Mr. Armstrong for eight years and does not know of anyone who witnessed a miracle done through him while he claimed to be an Apostle. At the same time, I witnessed or heard about a number of healings and miracles through other church leaders and brethren. Mr. Armstrong certainly never claimed that his miracles were proof of his Apostleship.

5. Mr. Armstrong did not have the humble approach of the New Testament leaders. They did not have this world's wealth (Acts 3:6, 1Cor 4:11) and were patient with brethren who did not always listen to their teaching. None proclaimed great titles for themselves. Herbert Armstrong proclaimed himself to be both the physical and spiritual head of the Church on earth—and cast out those who understood doctrines differently than he did. He lived an extravagant lifestyle while instructing his coworkers, about 100 times, to make sure they sent in their "widow's mites".

In conclusion, I think it is a big mistake to classify Mr. Armstrong's teaching as "the faith once delivered to the saints". While he taught much truth and rejected

much traditional error, his track record is nowhere close to the servants of God of the first century. Mr. Armstrong's track record is similar to many other religious leaders who rejected error, taught truth and turned many people to God and the Bible—but placed far too much emphasis on their own ministries. When I stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2Cor 5:10), I know He will uphold my desire to live by His Words, and the words of those men whom He chose in the first century. I will answer for my life from those words. Similarly, Mr. Armstrong will be judged for his teaching. If either of us taught error due to Bible translation problems or some other factor unknown to us, Christ will be lenient on us for the things we did not know (Luke 12:48). But if either of us deliberately taught error to increase our personal power, we will be punished with many stripes (Luke 12:47). I do not know how Mr. Armstrong will be judged. He built a huge work in a short time, but it came down even faster than it went up. I must not contend for the faith delivered by a man with an unknown status before God, but contend for the faith once delivered to the first century saints.

May God guide us all into that faith!  
—NSE

### Likes How Does The Eternal Govern Through Humans?

**LETTER:** November 6, 2001  
Dear Norman,

It is about time that I wrote to you, just wanted to let you know that i am promoting your article.

[www.servantsnews.com/docs/govhum.htm](http://www.servantsnews.com/docs/govhum.htm)

I've e-mailed to at least a half dozen people, posted up on a [name removed] forum and also got my husband (a major skeptic) to reading, and he agrees totally, in fact he was on to a lot of these myths before I was, and your article cleared up a lot of things...

And I'm corresponding with Horst, who read your article some time ago and found it very encouraging and when he tried to discuss it he could only find people hung up on hierarchy, so now we are going to start discussing it... And I e-mailed a link of your article to Monte, and he was really excited about it... (I met Monte in the CEM Forum, but that is run by Ron Dart, and it's not appropriate to talk about the subject of your article there! Ron doesn't allow references to "other ministries", anyway.) I would like to support your ministry,

and I have put the bug in my husband's ear, so please pray about his inspiration to give.

Also, please send me all your plans for the website, and let's see if we can help you.

My husband and I are musicians and I would like to talk to you about Psalms, but first I'm going to read your article about Psalms.

— Susan Owen, Switzerland,  
atl04@yahoo.com

**RESPONSE:** Thank you for sending *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?* to friends. That is often the best way to spread such information. Many people do not want to take the time to read a long religious article from somebody they do not know. It may turn out to be a big waste of time. If they just skim it, or read the end, they may see the conclusions before they see the proof and say "those are really strange ideas" and reject it without hearing the case. But when a friend someone knows and trusts recommends an article, they are more likely to read it all.

Thank you so much for volunteering to help. When my issues are caught up, God willing, I hope to do a lot more on my website.

— NSE

### Unclean Medical Supplements

**LETTER:** Dec 9, 2001  
Greetings.

I was looking for some input. I read this quote from an article in *Nutrition Action Health Letter*, a reputable magazine. "Glucosamine is a simple compound and is easy to manufacture. It's extracted from the shells of crabs and other crustaceans. Chondroitin, which is prepared from cow tracheae (windpipes) or shark cartilage, is more difficult to make."

I'd really appreciate your input because many of God's people (mostly the elderly) are taking this stuff to relieve pain from arthritis. (I'm one of them.)

— Ken Omick, Wisconsin

**RESPONSE:** The Bible teaches us not to eat unclean animals, and to consider ourselves "unclean" if we touch their carcasses. It does not mention what we should do about greatly refined products made from unclean animals. God does not have a secret law that He hopes to "catch us disobeying so He can punish us". On the other hand, we should do the

Continued on page 30

**"Truckers Study" from page 2**

Hank Hannegraff where a Muslim had called him and challenged him to show from the words of Jesus and Jesus alone that Jesus was in fact God. He didn't want to hear what Paul had to say or John, or anybody else, but from the words of Jesus Himself. Did Jesus Himself ever claim to be God? I commented on my disappointment of Hank's lame answers, and asked the men how they would answer a Muslim on this matter. Without missing a beat, one of the drivers said that Jesus claimed to be the "I AM". Indeed! I was struck how the truck driver could get to the heart of the issue and the Bible Answer Man could not.

I posited a different approach. I suggested asking the Muslim this question: "If I were to show you where Jesus claimed to be God, would you then believe Him and follow Him?" I would bet the Muslim would not take up the challenge. They don't accept the Bible's authority on such matters anyway. This led to a long discussion on how Jesus dealt with questions from the Pharisees.

The idea of the Trinity was an interesting sidelight. I asked these drivers how they would answer a Muslim who might accuse them of not being monotheistic because they believe in three Gods, and I got as answers a lot of stumbling, confused comments, which is what I expected. For whatever reason, I was unable to follow up with a challenge to the traditional beliefs of the Trinity, but instead we discussed the meaning of the word "one" (*echad* in Hebrew) and the prayer of Jesus in John 17 that talks in terms of the people of God "becoming one as we are one". I need to find a way to approach this subject with them and stimulate thought. In any case, I suggested that they might want to think through how they would answer a Muslim if they were to be asked this question. One of the reasons that Islam is the world's fastest growing religion is its rigid monotheism as opposed to the self-contradictory explanation Christians give for the Trinity, which in my mind is why Hank fell all over himself this week.

Today was an inspiration and a

highlight, as these studies usually are.  
— Lenny Cacchio

*[Using John 9:8, "...most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM," is not a good proof that Christ is God. While the NKJV and a couple other translations capitalize "I AM", most do not and there is nothing in the Greek manuscripts to indicate that they should. It is no different than dozens of other uses of "I am" in the New Testament, one of which is:*

*"Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, 'Is not this he who sat and begged?' Some said, 'This is he.' Others said, 'He is like him.' He [the blind man] said, 'I am he'" (John 9:8).*

*The last word "he", above, is not in the Greek—the blind man is saying "I am" in the same way Jesus did. Also, "I am" is not a good translation of what God said to Moses in Exodus 3:14. The Hebrew there is in the future tense. Hebrew translations often have something like "I shall be" or "I-will-be-there" as the Fox translation has it.*

*Nevertheless, John 9:8 is a great proof that Christ existed before Abraham. Also John 14:9 says: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." That is claiming to "be God" to me.*

— NSE]

**November 11, 2001**

We had four visitors today, and then a fifth later near the end of the study. One of the gentlemen has visited us many times, and he has been around enough that I am beginning to wonder if he considers this to be his church. So be it if it is!

I began with Genesis 2 and discussed briefly the rest that God established. Why did God feel a need to rest by establishing the Sabbath day? Obviously God was not tired, so why did He rest? I think it is interesting that the first thing God did after making the first man and woman was to take a break and spend time with

them. He stopped working and took time to build a relationship.

We went down through a few chapters of Genesis, including the taking of the forbidden fruit. The assertion of the serpent that "you shall be as gods" and that they would know good and evil is very much akin to the modern concepts of moral relativism. People think they can figure out good and evil for themselves without God, and in fact are taking on the prerogative of God.

One of the men mentioned his conclusion that a new seeker might be better served by being given just a New Testament. This was not to say that the Old Testament is worthless, but that new seekers often begin in Genesis, then get bogged down in all the "begats" and give up. If they begin with the gospels, they are more likely to stay with it and come to know Jesus Christ. The Old Testament can be picked up later.

Near the end of the study, a fifth guest arrived, and he and I stayed around afterward for the better part of an hour and talked.

It turns out he is a Seventh Day Baptist, and we had a great discussion about the history of that denomination. He grew up in that church, but he tells me his grandfather had a library of old books containing their history that he presumes was donated to the denomination at his death. He would hope one day to get his hands on them. To him without question the seventh day is the Sabbath, but unlike his grandfather he has not studied the subject inside out and wonders how Christians came to worship on Sunday.

He mentioned that the SDB congregation he grew up in had split in two some time around World War II, and he believes it was split because of contention between the English members and the German members over the war, although no one talked about it and discouraged him from asking. However, in spite of their split, they still came together for socials and



what-not. He could never understand why they didn't just merge.

Too bad he wasn't at the Bible study in the beginning where I planted some "Sabbath seeds". But God has His own ways.

*[It is easy for us, an outside group, to say, "Yes, why don't they merge if nobody even wants to talk about why they split?" Now let's talk about a young person or a new believer in one of the corporate Church of God groups. Will he or she be any less puzzled as to why these groups do not meet together and work together today? What will he or she think if they are still divided 10, 20 or 30 years from now? —NSE]*

**November 25, 2001**

Most weeks the studies are interesting but nothing out of the ordinary. We cover a few topics, give the drivers a place to study and pray, and know we have done some good. Today was a different sort of day.

Along with the three drivers and me, I was joined by Darwin Keese. Before getting started we were talking about various Bible translations. Darwin had his Companion Bible with him, and we talked about its study notes and the appendices, one of which gives a very good explanation of three days and three nights, which we threw out to seed a question. One of the drivers, however, was way ahead of us and knew that the Friday/Sunday tradition doesn't work. His congregation somewhere in Georgia has been involved in some rather interesting studies lately

including this topic, and he has learned that the Sabbath was changed around the time of Constantine. Moreover, they have been studying the Holy Days and their meaning. He had purchased a book written by John Hagee on the subject of the Holy Days, and shortly thereafter his church began to study them.

Well, the door was opened, so we turned to Leviticus 23, began with the first verse, and just went down through the chapter, referring back and forth between the Old and New Testaments, explaining those days in terms of their relationship to Jesus Christ and the Gospel. The men loved it, although the gentleman from Georgia knew much of this already. There were some insights that were new to him, and he was eagerly gobbling up everything we were saying. It was wonderful seeing these men realize how God has woven the two Testaments together into a unified whole.

Time allowed us to get up to Trumpets. As it turns out, CEM had just sent me a box of tapes for distribution, all of which are from the Holy Day series, and I was pleased to give them some.

Afterwards Darwin and I were talking, and the question arose: "What's going on here?" Here is a man who learned about the Holy Days first of all from a mainstream Protestant evangelist, and then had it reinforced by his own congregation, who are not only studying the Holy Days, but issues such as the Sabbath and the sign of Jonah. Could it be that

God is raising up stones to the sons of Abraham because the Churches of God have been so pathetically weak? Are we so close to the end times, and is the Church of God so weak that God is exercising His sovereignty without us?

In any case, it was intimated to the gentleman from Georgia that he has some important knowledge. Now what is he going to do with it?

*[God has always exercised His Sovereignty with or without us—the Church of God groups have covered only a small part of the world for only a short part of its history. Searching the Internet for "Sabbath", "Holy Days", "Feast of Tabernacles" produces thousands of hits, many of which have nothing to do with Church of God groups. I believe Church of God groups are so busy trying to get their doctrine perfect and woo other CoG members to their group that they are not spending enough time teaching others. We often quote John 6:44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him," but forget that we have no guarantee that He has to call them through our group. Thanks for making the point, Lenny, and thanks, through these studies, for showing that neither money nor a large number of people are needed to teach others what we know.]*

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**"Letters & Responses" from page 28**

best we can to follow God. I have not investigated this particular issue, but I make the following general suggestions. 1) Try to adjust one's diet, exercise and other habits so supplements are not needed. 2) Look for alternatives that are not unclean. 3) If none can be found, pray and ask God to show you what to do.

—NSE

*There are manufacturers who make glucosamine and chondroitin tablets, with ingredients made from fish (shark cartilage), not from cattle or pigs as in cheaper versions by others. Glucosamine and chondroitin are both helpful in maintaining connectivity tissue. One source for these is Healthspan, PO Box 64, Park Street, St Peter Port, Guernsey, GY1 3BT, telephone +44-1481-714015. —David King*

**"Christ... Leaving Us an Example" from page 22**

night is coming when no one can work."

And finally, as we all look forward to the millennial Kingdom of Christ, let us remember that those who are promised to be there are not some who simply had the "right doctrine". They may well have had right doctrine, but the characteristic mentioned here is again the willingness to follow the example of Jesus Christ, and lay down ones life for one's friends:

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (Rev 20:4).

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6).

***“Church Bible Teaching Ministry Begins” from page 32***

have not filed form 1023, but the name on the check can apparently make a difference as to whether tax auditors will question a deduction or not—a

name like “Servants’ News” does not sound like a church and may be more often challenged, whereas a name like “Church Bible Teaching Ministry” probably would not be.

I intend to publish the declaration and other foundational documents of

Church Bible Teaching Ministry in the future. I hope other congregations and ministries will consider using these methods that were so common at the founding of our country, but have recently declined greatly in use.

—Norman Edwards 

***“News from Local Congregations, Edwards Family Trip” from page 5***

with Tom and Thelma Justus. He now serves an independent congregation, which merged with a Church of God Seventh Day group several years back. While the Church of God Seventh Day does not usually observe the annual Holy Days, they asked to hear the Feast of Trumpets message when it fell on a Sabbath. I had never thought of congregational mergers as a way to teach Holy Days, but that is what has happened.

On January 3rd, we stopped at Eldon, Missouri, the home of John and Debbie Sash. We discussed many things, including some of the difficulty in learning and teaching the truth about history. Debbie has been continuing her college to obtain a master’s degree in history. Some interesting information about the civil war: In school, we heard about Abraham Lincoln’s “Emancipation Proclamation” that “set the slaves free”. But how many of us

ever read the proclamation? It is only about 700 words; it nicely fits on one page. It is actually a restatement and clarification of an earlier proclamation. But both proclamations freed the slaves **only in the south**—the states “in rebellion” against the union: “...all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free...” The proclamation goes into great detail as to exactly which states and parts of states were under southern control—and shows that slaves were only freed there. A popular history book I have on the civil war leaves out most of this detail from the proclamation, making it difficult to determine that Lincoln only freed the slaves in the South. It was several years before the Northern slaves were freed. If the civil war were about slavery, why didn’t Lincoln free the slaves in the North first? Should not one clean up one’s own house first?

The Civil War was about states’ rights versus a strong central government and (like most wars) it was about money. As it was, General Lee and other Southern leaders did not own slaves because they felt it was morally wrong. Mr. Lincoln and Northern General Grant kept their slaves throughout the entire war. There were many other abuses during the Civil War. The entire state of Missouri was placed under martial law and people were forcibly removed from several counties. Unarmed citizens were executed by the military without trials and without even being charged with crimes. We should want to know how that happened, rather than say, “it cannot happen today.”

We visited my wife’s sister in Indiana and returned home to a fax, 17 phone messages, about 100 letters and about 250 e-mails. About half were duplicates, junk mail, etc. But the others still represent a lot of work. It was a very beneficial trip for many of us.

—Norman & Marleen Edwards

***“Answers to Hierarchical Leader Letter” from page 14***

responses to it. I think it would change many people’s minds—though certainly not all.

I appreciate your desire to help humanity. You appear to be an honest

man with a good heart. I encourage you, as opportunity permits, to work closely with the LCG leaders and observe how their hierarchy works from the inside. It was that very thing that sent me to the Scriptures to study, and those studies that caused me to seek a Work that was centered around Christ, rather than a hierar-

chical organization.

Nevertheless, I rejoice in the good that the LCG is doing. There is more than enough work for all of us to do, and none of us (including me) do it in perfection. May you work in peace, my brother.

—Norman Edwards 

***“Two Pictures of Our Need for Christ” from page 24***


babes, with God’s goal set before us to grow in grace and knowledge until we reach the full maturity, just as the beloved Son of God is mature (2 Pet 3:18; Eph 4:13). This ultimately leads to intimacy and oneness with our God.

The Passover service sets forth our experience in our voyage of life. It is our continual condition, of growing to full maturity. It is not the old man improving, or getting better—for he has been crucified—but our human

condition is in the process of purification. We, individually, are being transformed (conformed) to His death in order that His life may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Even though the ultimate goal of Jesus’ death was to bring us into Life (Rom 5:10), we can never bypass the importance of His beaten body and shed blood. We need to remember—proclaim—His death annually, on a continual basis to help us focus on our need for Him. We acknowledge that our condition in this journey of life is a needy one, because it is all too easy to take our eyes off the new Captain

of our vessel and let the old man take control of the helm once again. Remember what the beloved Son of God experienced on our behalf. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1Cor 11:26).

Maybe this will help illuminate what Paul said in Galatians 2:20; “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” 

# Church Bible Teaching Ministry Begins

After studying more about creating paper documents for local congregations and ministries, I have decided to better document my own church ministry. At the same time, I hope to improve and simplify some documents, forms and envelopes.

*Servants' News* has been published since 1995, intended for people with a Church of God background. *Shelter in the Word* has been published since 1998 and intended for a general Christian audience. I have diligently tried to keep out anything that would require a Church of God background to understand. At present, there are only about 50 *Shelter in the Word* recipients that do not take *Servants' News*, but there are also many who get both, but who are primarily interested in *Shelter in the Word*.

I have not felt a great urgency to try to increase *Shelter in the Word* readership, and I admit that it has not had a lot of consistency in its publication size or content. It has had extremely basic articles, and then it has included massive papers like *What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment?* and *Starting a Local Congregation*. However, I thought it was very impor-

tant to get in the habit of producing articles that can be understood without a CoG background. There is no reason for people who want to come to God to feel like they have to learn and re-live 50 years of Radio Church of God and Worldwide Church of God history—just like most of us would not want to learn and re-live 50 years of Church of God Seventh Day or Seventh Day Adventist History. Indeed, I have felt that if some *Shelter in the Word* readers would read some of the long banterings about organization and church government in *Servants' News*, they might conclude that they need to look elsewhere for help in serving God.

But my efforts to keep the *Servants' News* name away from *Shelter in the Word* readers have met with difficulty when it comes to basic literature, form letters, envelopes, etc. Do I need to print two versions of each, one “from” *Servants' News* and the other “from” *Shelter in the Word*? It is much easier to simply make all of them “from” Church Bible Teaching Ministry. Readers of both publications will see the CBTM name, but need not know about the other publication. If I ever have reason to add another publication (as if these two

are not already more than I can do), I will not need to produce many new envelopes, forms, etc.

The name, Church Bible Teaching Ministry, was chosen because it was descriptive of what I do, and because it should be more helpful for those who give offerings and desire tax deductions. We have frequently quoted the following paragraph from IRS publication 557 (rev. Nov 1999), *Tax-exempt Status for Your Organization*, page 21, col. 3:

**Churches.** Although a church, its integrated auxiliaries, or a convention or association of churches is not required to file Form 1023 to be exempt from federal income tax or to receive tax deductible contributions, the organization may find it advantageous to obtain recognition of exemption...

I believe it is a mistake for churches and Church ministries to file form 1023, because they must promise to abide by all IRS regulations both present and future, which are sometimes contrary to Scripture. As I understand it (consult a licensed professional for advice), courts have upheld tax deductions to churches and ministries that

*Continued on page 31*

## Partial Literature List

All items are free upon request. All back issues of *Servants' News* are available as well as a complete **Literature List** and a **Literature Subject Index**.

### Mature Literature

- Assembling on the Sabbath** by Norman Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.
- Biblical Calendar Basics** by Norman Edwards, 26 pages. Explanation of Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)
- How Do We Give to the Eternal?** by Richard Tafoya & Norman Edwards, 36 pages. Biblical study of giving and tithing.
- 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.

**What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment?** by Norman Edwards, 83 pages. What happens to people after they die? What about “bad” people? “Good” people? Unbelievers? Diligent believers? Lax believers? Read the many scriptures that answer these questions.

**Study Resources and Information Freedom Biblical Information Center Catalog** by Wayne Schatzle, 12 pages.

Free sources of literature and tapes.

**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.

**The Journal: News of the Churches of God** edited by Dixon Cartwright. One free sample issue. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups. 24 pages.

**Servants' News Statement of Receipts and Expenses**, 2 pages.

**Servants' News Literature List**, 24 pages.

**Servants' News Literature Subject Index**, 51 pages. All articles & literature by subject.

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