

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 3, No. 2

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

Mar/Apr 1997

CULT, OCCULT, NEW AGE

What Are They?

With the recent mass suicide of 39 members of the Heaven's Gate "cult" in San Diego, California, there is much in the news about "cults" and the potential dangers they pose. Could your Sabbath-keeping group be considered a cult?

In addition to the term, "cult", we also frequently hear the terms "Occult" and "New Age" used in the media—sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. Some people think all three of these things are equivalent. Are they?

What Is a "Cult"?

Because the meaning of "cult" has changed so much, a dictionary does not completely answer the question. The first definition in *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (1996) is: "formal religious veneration: worship."

There seems nothing wrong with the above—it would apply to many people. Other definitions however, are: "a great devotion to a person, idea, object, movement, or work [and] a small group of people characterized by such devotion" and "a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious [and] its body of adherents."

The latter definition is probably the one most intended in the popular media today. Cults are considered "unorthodox" groups that could be dangerous. Exactly what makes a group unorthodox depends greatly on

Continued on page 39

Modern Bible Translations: Tools to Truth or New Age Conspiracy?

We have received several requests for an article addressing a book that has been making the rounds of religious groups throughout the country for some time called "New Age Bible Versions" by Mrs. Gail Riplinger. Recently, a video on the same topic has become available.

This book and video contain startling allegations that all of the so-called modern translations of the Bible have been created as part of a concerted conspiracy by evil men—inspired by Satan—to deliberately undermine the truths of scripture by falsely translating the Hebrew and Greek texts.

Mrs. Riplinger contends that the King James Bible of 1611 is the **only** English translation to date that is untainted by this conspiracy.

Mrs. Riplinger is only one of a number of writers and teachers who hold this view. Usually dubbed the "King James Only" movement, this teaching has been around for some time. Three other well-known staunch supporters of this view are Texe Marrs, Peter Ruckman and William Grady. Whole congregations of Protestant fundamentalist churches have adopted this position, and pointedly note in advertisements in phone books and elsewhere that they are "King James 1611" fellowships.

Although some might assume these accusations are limited to more recent translations such as the NIV or NASB, that is not the case. Accusations are

Continued on page 14

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 2 A Bad Habit
- 3 Is Tithing for Today?

Sacred Names Issues Addressed:

- 5 What Should We Call the Father and Son?
- 7 Praise Him and His Name!
- 9 Why Jews Don't Say His Name
- 9 Why I Use the Sacred Names

Other Articles:

- 10 Festival Information
- 11 Calendar Conference Corrections
- 12 Earthshine?
- 13 The Living Word
- 17 Passover: Questions & Answers—1 Corinthians 11
- 20 Local Congregation News
- 25 Letters & Responses

A Bad Habit:

Some preachers and writers have the bad habit of using the concepts "Word of God" and "Bible" interchangeably. Following are some facts illustrating why this should not be done.

"**Scripture**" and the concept of "**Word of God**" were never used as synonyms by writers who lived before Christ—they are not interchangeable or equivalent in meaning. This may be verified by checking out those words in any Concordance. The Hebrew words for "Word of God" are *DAVAR YHWH* and the word for "Scripture" is *HA SEPTHER*. These are two different concepts with separate meanings.

The Son, as recorded by Mark, Luke, Matthew and John, never used these two concepts as equivalents. In fact, he put a definite distinction between the two of them. "...You pour over the Scriptures for you imagine that you will find age lasting life in them...But you are not willing to come to me to have real life"(John 5:39-40). Speaking of the religious crowd, Christ said: "And ye have not his word abiding in you..." (v. 38). They had knowledge of the scriptures but did not have His word. The same is true today. Many religious people do not believe the word of God to be alive and active in their daily lives.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews did not say: "The word of God is a book you study and dissect every week." Instead, he wrote: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12 ASV).

Can historic words of Yeshua (Jesus) contradict the in-coming Word of God? Of course not! Do the separate meanings of these two concepts reduce the importance of the Bible? Absolutely not! In fact, without practicing Yeshua's words as recorded in the Bible, we would not hear His living words. This is very important. If you do not practice His sayings and keep the ten Commandments, you do not hear His living and active Word very well. If we keep His Commandments, the holy spirit will guide us.

In summary, the present popular saying, "The Bible is the Word of God" is not recorded anywhere in the Bible.

Neither the Son nor His apostles have ever said so. The Scriptures have a special valuable function. All Scriptures are inspired by God and given for teaching, reproof and for correction in righteousness so that the man of God is equipped for all good works. We cannot change this valuable function of the Holy Writings.

Why then is the phrase "The Bible is the Word of God" popular in religious circles? One possibility may be that many Jewish and Christian believers prefer it to the reality of God "interfering" with their lives—speaking to them directly or through another human being. The Scriptures are filled with examples of this nature—Joseph was warned in dreams, Zechariah heard from an angel, the holy spirit told Paul where to preach, Agabus received prophecies, etc.

Another reason may be that it is much easier to dissect a book than to learn to listen to God. We can read meanings into or out of verses we do not like—but God cannot be fooled.

A third possibility may be that religious people love catchy slogans. The English writer Malcolm Muggeridge says that the 20th century would go down in history as the "Age of Gullibility". A lie, a thousand times repeated, is becoming a truth in the minds of the multitudes.

Let us look at the Sabbath Day observance. There is nothing in the Scriptures about abolishing the Sabbath Day, yet millions of Christians believe the Sabbath has been done away with because of a continual repetition of the idea. Likewise, nowhere in the Scriptures can it be found that the Bible is the word of God, yet millions believe it because it is endlessly repeated in literature and from the pulpits. Few bother to check out the facts.

Yes, there are too many people who claim to have personally received a "Word of God" when they have not, but that should not cause brethren to ignore the commands to seek the true "Word of God" in our life. **If** we limit the "Word of God" to the Bible **only**, it allows every preacher to proclaim himself an instant expert in the "Word of God"—all he or she needs is a Bible in the hand and the gift of gab.

—John Purvins

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 3, No. 2 March/April 1997

Servants' News is a ministry to help others understand the Creator's will, obey Him, and teach others. We believe that the Bible contains the foundation of knowledge about our Creator and that He is actively working through people today. Our focus is to help the Sabbath-keeping brethren who believe Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah, but we realize that the Eternal works with many groups and individuals.

We believe the gospel should be given freely—you may copy this newsletter and give it to others. *Servants' News* has nothing to sell and has no financial ties with other organizations, but is supported by those who personally decide to help this ministry. We do not have IRS tax exempt status, but the IRS accepts some charitable deductions without such status (see IRS Publication 557, p. 16, col. 1).

Editor & Publisher: Norman S. Edwards
Production Editor: Norman Arthur Brumm
Associate Editors: Phyllis Brumm, Tim & Jeanice Davis, Marleen Edwards, Robert & Christine Feith
Technical Services: George Dewey
Office Administrator: Pam Dewey
Contributors: Many! Thanks to everyone!

NOTICE: The people listed above do not necessarily endorse every article in this newsletter.

Servants' News accepts articles for publication. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for items that you want returned. We are happy to print corrections for any significant errors. Address articles, letters and subscription or literature requests to:

Servants' News
PO Box 220
Charlotte, Michigan 48813-0220

Phone: 517-543-5544

Fax: 517-543-8899

E-Mail: 75260.1603@CompuServe.com

Internet Address:

<http://www.best.com/~oasis7/sn/>

Subscription and literature requests **may** be sent to the following addresses. Contributions received at these locations will be used for duplicating and mailing.

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

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

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

Most scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Circulation: 2000

Servants' News is published monthly except for combined March/April and September/October issues. Subscriptions are free to people who request it and are genuinely interested in it. The Publisher reserves the right to refuse subscriptions. *Servants' News* is published by Norman S. Edwards, 202 Pearl St, Charlotte, Michigan 48813. Application to mail at periodical rates is pending at Charlotte, Michigan. Postmaster: send address changes to Servants' News, PO Box 220, Charlotte, Michigan 48813-0220.

\$\$ IS TITHING \$\$ \$\$ FOR TODAY? \$\$

By Richard A. Wiedenheft

Under the Old Covenant, tithing was commanded by God. In the New Covenant, tithing is...

While most Christians would agree on the first sentence, they would not agree on how to complete the second! Their emotions and sensitivities would be involved—because tithing hits right where it hurts—in the pocketbook. For that reason many people just don't talk about it, and many preachers don't preach about it—even though the Bible has much to say on the subject.

Those who seek to please God cannot ignore what the Word of God says about tithing and giving. And the issues involved for Christians go far beyond whether or not tithing is commanded in the New Testament.

Tithing By The Patriarchs

The first Biblical reference to tithing is found in Genesis 14. Abraham, after returning from a military victory, gave one tenth of the plunder to Melchizedek (Gen 14:20, Heb 7:4).

A number of years later, Abraham's grandson, Jacob, made a promise to God regarding tithing:

If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey... so that I return safely to my father's house... of all that you give me I will give you a tenth (Gen 28:20-22 [NIV throughout article]).

While these references do not prove that there was a universal tithing law before Moses, the Patriarchs' examples can hardly be taken lightly.

These men honored God with a portion of their increase! The portion they both chose to give was 10%—a tithe. Can it be mere coincidence that when God legislated a percentage for Israel it was also 10%?

Tithing Under the Old Covenant

When Yahweh established His national covenant with Israel, He instituted a financial system designed to provide for the service of the temple and the needs of the Levites, the priests, poor people, widows and strangers.

A first tithe went to support the Levites who would, in turn, give a tenth of that tenth to the priests (Num 18:21, 28).

A second tithe or tenth was set aside to be enjoyed by the people "...in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name..." (Deut 12:6-19; 14:22-27). This tenth was to be eaten and shared with others during festivals held at the sanctuary established by Yahweh.

Deut 14:28 and 26:12 mention a tithe that was to be stored in the towns at the end of every three years. It was to be given to the Levites, aliens, fatherless and widows. The majority of Biblical scholars believe this tithe was the second tithe being used for a different purpose every three years. However, a few think it was a third tithe. The Bible itself seems ambiguous (M'Clintock & Strong Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature, 1969, article "Tithe").

Questions About Israel's Tithing System

The question about whether there were two or three tithes under the Old Covenant is only one of many controversies surrounding this subject. One major question is: On what was one to pay tithes? The first five books of the Bible mention tithing only in reference to produce and animals. Were these agricultural products the only income to be tithed? Or were they simply examples of income in general, specified because Israel was an agrarian society? Was all produce titheable? or only that which came from the Promised Land?

The debate about these and other questions will probably go on and on, but two Biblical examples seem to offer some insight:

First, Abraham tithed the booty of war and it was acceptable to God (Gen 14).

Second, the Pharisee of Jesus' day claimed, "I give a tithe of *all* I get" (Luke 18:12).

These examples would seem to indicate that a tithe on any type of increase

Is This Heresy?

Many Sabbath-keepers have been taught that tithing was an eternal law like the Sabbath—it always existed; only the priesthood which received the tithes changed. They usually believe they have Biblical proof that tithing is an eternal law, but they have **no proof when and how** tithing changed from the Levitical priesthood to the New Testament priesthood!

The New Testament priesthood is all of the brethren (1Pet 2:5,9). No scripture says the "ministry" is the priesthood. There is neither scripture nor history indicating that tithes were collected by "the church" until hundreds of years after the apostles. Nevertheless, we find a great variety of **other methods** mentioned in the Bible for financing New Testament preaching.

Are all the tithes sent to big organizations to preach the Gospel paid in vain? **No!** When money is really used to preach and teach—**not** to buy opulent cars, houses, meals or airline tickets—then it is well worth it.

If people are not required to tithe, will there be sufficient money for any group to do "a big work"? **Yes!** They will often give much more than a tithe. People **voluntarily** sold their houses and possessions in order to start the first "big work" (Acts 4:24-27). Our Savior told one man that he would have to sell nearly everything he had to become perfect (Matt 19:21).

The other issue many brethren are facing today is: **Where to give?** If you believe that the Eternal works through only one human organization, then the answer is simple. But **now**, most brethren realize that they are individually accountable for the work they do (1Cor 3:13)—if a man gives to a group that accomplishes nothing, then he accomplishes nothing for the Eternal.

The article at left was written in 1984 by Richard Wiedenheft, a former WCG minister. It shows that the understanding existed then, but few people listened. Wiedenheft has continued to serve in Sabbath-keeping congregations since that time, and is now the principal of a Sabbath-keeping boarding high school (call 517-725-2391 for information).

For a detailed study of tithing and giving in the Bible, ask for our free paper: *How Do We Give To the Eternal?*
—NSE

was acceptable to God, who, after all, is interested in the heart and attitude, not in minimal letter-of-the-law obedience.

Jesus Comments on Tithing

The Bible records Jesus commenting on tithing only twice during his ministry. In upbraiding the Pharisees, He condemned them for tithing their garden herbs so carefully while neglecting important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. He told them they "...should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" (Matt 23:23). His comments in Luke 11:42 are very similar.

Jesus' answer is entirely understandable. The Old Covenant was still in effect. The Levitical priesthood and the temple were in operation. Tithing was to be expected—and Jesus did not speak against it.

What about *after* Jesus died and was resurrected? What about *after* the Levitical priesthood was superseded by the high priesthood of Jesus after the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed (Heb 7,8,9)? And what about Gentile Christians? Were they required to tithe, and, if so, to whom? To the Levites?

Tithing Under The New Covenant

The New Testament clearly shows that the New Covenant is indeed new—that all the legal provisions of the Old Covenant do not automatically apply in the New just because they were part of the Old. Nowhere does the New Testament directly state that Christians should begin tithing to the church instead of to the Levitical priesthood, which still existed during much of the New Testament period.

Indeed, the record indicates that Jewish Christians continued to be quite attached to Judaism. The Apostles at Jerusalem even said of Paul, "you yourself are living in obedience to the law?" (Acts 21:24). It would have been out of the question for Paul and others to have collected tithes from Jewish Christians while the temple continued in Jerusalem.

Hebrews 7 mentions tithing, but only to illustrate Paul's argument that the priesthood of the Levites was replaced by the priesthood of Jesus Christ. This chapter in no way indicates that the Old Covenant tithing law was altered so that tithes were to be paid to the church.

It is our conclusion that there is no

legal requirement for Christians to tithe in accordance with the laws of the Old Covenant. **No preacher or church has authority to bind tithing, as a law of God**, on Christians (although any organization can include tithing as one of its own requirements for membership).

Does this mean that tithing has no importance for Christians?

Absolutely not!

God required Israel to pay 10% of its increase to support a physical, temporal ministry. How much more should Christians willingly dedicate 10% and more of their income to a spiritual ministry, to the gospel of Jesus Christ!

All Israel was **required to pay** tithes, firstfruits, firstlings, vows, offerings—out of duty to God, how much more should we be willing to *give* voluntarily a free-will tithe out of faith and love for God and man!

What About Generosity and Christian Liberty?

While the New Testament does not teach tithing as a legal requirement, it does have a great deal to say about the principles of generosity, sacrificial giving and freewill offerings. Note the following very direct and powerful passages about Christian financial responsibilities:

Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously... God loves a cheerful giver (2Cor 9:6).

If a man's gift is...contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously... (Rom 12:7-8)

Command those who are rich in this present world...to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure...for the coming age (1Tim 6:17-19).

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (Heb 13:16).

...you sent me aid again and again when I was in need...I am amply supplied, now that I have received... the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God (Phil 4:16-18).

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shak-

en together and running over, will be poured into your lap (Luke 6:38).

As Jesus observed people putting money into the temple treasury, His disciples were surprised when He compared the great sums put in by the rich to the few coins given by a widow. "'I tell you the truth,' he said, 'This poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on'" (Luke 21:1-4).

The New Testament is plain indeed. God considers giving a sacrifice to Him as a sweet smelling offering in heaven. He looks on the heart and the attitude of the giver. He looks for cheerfulness and generosity, not just for a percentage.

But what is generosity?

What is generosity according to God's Word?

Our society has become so affluent, so materialistic, so conditioned by mass media, that we have drifted far from the concept of generosity portrayed in the Bible. We have come to regard so many of life's luxuries as necessities. We have full closets, toy boxes, garages, basements and refrigerators—but how full is our treasury laid up in heaven (Luke 18:22)? How much do we contribute regularly to the needs of others and to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Consider, for a moment, some of the things we spend money on: amusements, cable TV, cosmetics, eating out, fancy homes, hobbies, interior decorating, liquor, movies, music lessons, new clothes, pet care, records & tapes, vacations, video games, etc.

Many would argue that there is nothing wrong, necessarily, with any of these and many other similar items, but where does God fit in?

Does He come first? Or ... does He get what's left over—if there is anything left over?

Does giving to Him come at the top of our priority spending list—or somewhere down with hobbies, pet care and music lessons?

The truth is that God demands to come first in every aspect of our lives—including finances. And if giving to Him has no significant impact on our budget, we have a serious problem—and we really don't know what generosity is all about!



The issue of Sacred Names has affected Sabbath-keeping congregations for over 50 years. The Old Testament has numerous verses indicating that we should praise and use His Name (see page 7). Yet, the Jews, who have copied the Old Testament, have not pronounced that name for centuries and “officially” claim that they no longer know what it is. This was done to prevent the name from being blasphemed (see page 9).

This article will probably not answer all of your questions on this issue, but it will demonstrate the basis for the arguments and, hopefully, help you tolerate people with various views.

What Is the Father’s Name?

The name of our Father is technically called the “tetragrammaton” and, in Hebrew, is יהוה. It is used over 6500 times in the Old Testament. The English representation is YHVH or some will say YHWH. (We have barely gotten started and we already have a debate!) This word is translated “LORD” in most Bibles—using SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS to distinguish it from “Lord” which is translated from the Hebrew *Adonai* and means “master” or “boss”. Sacred Name proponents are quick to point out that the name of the false deity Baal also means “lord” or “master”. Hence, they try to completely avoid using the word “Lord”. However, the word *Adonai* is used to address our Father many times in scripture (Ex 4:10, Num 14:17, etc.).

Most scholars agree that the **meaning** of יהוה is “the ever living One” or “the One that was, is and shall be.” Hence, Moffatt and a few other translations render it “the Eternal”. There is, of course, debate as to whether we should use a word that sounds the same as יהוה or if we should use a word that means the same thing in our language. We will discuss pronunciation issues later.

In addition to the name mentioned above, there are many other words used for our Father in the Old Testament. Translated, some are: “the Almighty”, “Healer”, “Helper”, “Most High”, etc. The most common one is obviously “God.” It is translated from the Hebrew *Elohim* which is used over 2600 times and essentially means “mighty one”. It cannot be considered a sacred name because it is also used numerous times for false gods (Gen 3:5, 31:30; 2Kgs 1:2). Our word “god” means essentially the

Sacred Names:

WHAT SHOULD WE CALL THE FATHER AND SON?

same thing as *elohim*; it can refer to true or false gods—we capitalize it to indicate the true God. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that the word “god” is derived from the name of a German false deity, so some brethren refuse to use that name in an effort to obey Ex 23:13: “make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth.” However, this is a bit of doctrinal stretching because the word “god” does not imply a German false deity to 99.99% of the people who use the word, nor can any such definition be found in most dictionaries.

It is clear from research that “LORD” is a poor translation of the Father’s name. The use of the word “God” is only slightly questionable. But let us assume for a moment that both names are “names of Baal.” Does that mean that people who pray using those names will not have contact with our Father? The answer is probably here:

"And it shall be, in that day," Says the LORD, "That you will call Me 'My Husband,' And no longer call Me 'My Master' [Hebrew:*Baali*], For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, And they shall be remembered by their name no more" (Hos 2:16-17).

This verse shows that the Eternal does not want to be called by names of Baal, though it does not define exactly what those names are. Some people claim it includes every name except their pronunciation of the tetragrammaton, others would say it simply includes names of known false gods. However, we can see that our Father did accept that it was Him being addressed. He said “no longer call **Me** *Baali*,” **not** “no longer call upon *Baali*.”

We can gain some insight when we read the parts of the Bible that are not written in Hebrew. Many people do not realize that Daniel 2:4 through 7:28 as well as parts of the book of Ezra are in Aramaic, not Hebrew. In these books we find no example of an attempt to transliterate the tetragrammaton into Aramaic. The Aramaic *Elahh'* is used, which largely corresponds to the Hebrew *Elohim*—meaning “God.” In Daniel

5:23 we also find the Aramaic *ma-re'* used for our Father. It means “dominant one” or “lord” and is twice used to describe Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4:19,24).

Nearly all New Testament manuscripts do not contain any transliteration of the tetragrammaton. A **very few** old fragments have been discovered that have Hebrew names, but it is not possible to know if these are copies of what the New Testament writers originally wrote or if they are copies of entirely Greek manuscripts where someone inserted Hebrew names. It is quite possible that there were “Sacred Name” sects 1700 years ago!

The word “alleluia” occurs in Revelation 19:1,3,4,6 and is a transliteration of the Hebrew *hallelujah* which means “praise *Yah*”. Most will agree that *Yah* is a short form of the tetragrammaton. Finally, some claim that part or all of the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew and then later translated into Greek when the Sacred Name was edited out. While we have seen evidence that Matthew, Revelation and a few other books might have once been written in Hebrew, there is no evidence that some of the other books were—especially Paul’s letters to the Gentiles. In reality we find that the Greek word *Theos* is constantly used for “God” (the Father) and the Greek *kurios* is consistently used for “Lord” (referring to the Father, Son and other authority figures). It is clear that our Father did not find it essential to maintain or command the use of His Hebrew Name in the New Testament which has been preserved for us. We also understand that such a lack of a New Testament command is not necessarily a basis to cease from performing an Old Testament action.

What Name Should We Use?

While we believe that we have established that the use of our Father’s Hebrew name is not necessary for salvation, it seems better to use His name rather than a term like “Lord”, which neither conveys the meaning nor the pronunciation of the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrew Bible manuscripts do not contain vowels, so they do not tell us exactly how to pronounce it. The Jews have said *Adonai* (“Lord”) or *HaShem* (“the Name”) when they read the Name in Scripture for hundreds of years, and most no longer claim to know the original pronunciation. The question is, “**How should we pronounce His**

Name?"

Finding the answer to that question is much like answering the question: "What is the correct Biblical calendar?" The first paper you read seems to have the issue all solved. So does the second, third, tenth and twentieth paper—but most end up with different conclusions. **We are continually amazed by the amount of opinion stated as historical fact with no supporting evidence.** But when evidence is used, there is an incredible variety of form and type. We have seen pronunciations for the name derived from Hebrew pronunciation studies, etymology, Rabbi's opinions, ancient documents in other languages that supposedly contain His name, "secret" ancient documents, claimed divine revelation, and more. **We have never seen a paper that attempted to compare all of the various arguments and conclude which is right.** We would like to produce such a paper some day, but, it will take hundreds of hours and we will not do it anytime soon. For now, we must say that we are not sure.

The most common pronunciation of our Father's name is probably "Jehovah", since it is used in the KJV Bible (Ex 6:3; Pslm 83:18; Isa 12:2, 26:4). and because it is "pushed" by the Jehovah's Witnesses. The most common pronunciation used by Sacred Name groups is "Yahweh." However, we also have papers giving "proof" for "Yehovah", "Yehowah", "Yaveh", "Iiaaooe", "YaWee", "Yaohu Ul" and others.

What is the Son's Name

But the problem of names does not end with the pronunciation of the Father's name. The correct pronunciation of the Son's name has also been put forth as "Yeshua", "Y'Shua", "Yahshua", "Yahoshua", "Yahshahwa", "Yao-hushua" and others. The reasons used differ as much as the reasons used to derive the pronunciation of the Father's name. There are a few key scriptures that people use to place great importance on the name of the Son. We are told to ask the Father in His Son's name (John 14:13-14, 15:16, 16:23), that we must be saved in that name (Acts 4:12—though there is some debate on this), that those who "believe in His name" will be children of God (John 1:12), and the Philadelphians are partly described as those who have "not denied My name" (Rev 3:8).

What is wrong with using "Jesus"? It is the English version of the Greek *Iesous*, which some will claim comes from "Zeus", king of the Greek gods. That is a minority etymological view, even though the sound of "Jesus" is more similar to "Zeus" than to the common Jewish Hebrew pronunciation of "Yeshua". Nearly all scholars agree that "Jesus" and the Old Testament "Joshua" are the same name. We can be fairly sure of this since the Greek *Iesous* (usually "Jesus") is also properly translated "Joshua." in two places (Acts 7:45, Heb 4:8). Most Jews would claim to know how this name is pronounced ("Yeshua" or "Y'Shua"), but many Sacred Name groups claim the Jews at some point intentionally corrupted the pronunciation.

Finally, there is a Greek/Hebrew controversy of the Son's title. "Christ" is translated from the Greek *Christos*, and means "anointed." However, some researchers find undesirable associations with this term and prefer the Hebrew *mashiyach* or English "Messiah." It is difficult to substantiate that "evil translators" tried to remove all references to *mashiyach* from the Greek New Testament because the Greek equivalent, *Messias*, occurs twice (John 1:41, 4:25). Of all the Sacred Name issues, this is probably the least debated. However, it is good to understand it since you may hear the expression *Mashiyach Yashua* (Christ Jesus), *Yeshua HaMashiyach* (Jesus the Christ), or some other variant in religious discussions and writings.

The Hebrew word for "name" is *shem* (Strong's #8034). Some insist that it always refers to the actual sound or writing of a name—therefore we cannot fulfill scriptures to call upon or praise His name unless we actually pronounce it. A study of the word *shem* shows that it can have other meanings and uses. It can refer to a person's power, character or reputation (Gen 6:4, 12:2; Deut 22:14,19, 1Chr 5:24, Ezk 23:10, and many others). For example, "A good name is better than precious ointment..." (Eccl 7:1) is not talking about a pleasant sounding name. The majority of uses of *shem* may well refer to the sound or writing of a name, but the Hebrew does not support the dogmatic claims of some Sacred Name teachers.

Avoiding Division

Servants' News encourages brethren to tolerate one another's understanding

of this subject and not be quick to judge. Some of our writers use the understanding of the correct Sacred Names and others use the traditional Christian names. This writer prefers using "the Eternal," "Savior" and "Messiah" because they have appropriate meanings and are acceptable to a great number of people. Most of our readers have witnessed miracles and answered prayers made using the names "God" and "Jesus". People who use other names have experienced similar results. We should be able to talk to people about doctrinal issues if they use almost any reasonable name. If one does not understand it, just ask. But if brethren feel that we must correct others for the names they use, it will be difficult to talk about any other subject.

Although they probably do not consciously plan it, sometimes it seems that people adopt certain doctrines just so they can feel more righteous than others. This happens with Sacred Names as well as the Calendar, Passover, Pentecost, Remarriage and a host of other doctrinal issues. The effect is to divide people who could otherwise work together in groups so scattered and small that they have a difficult time assembling together or reaching out to teach others.

If we understand a certain thing in the Scripture, then we should do it—it is righteousness. It is important to realize the difference between righteousness and self-righteousness. **If we can no longer fellowship with other people because they do not do everything we do, then we may have become self-righteous.** Our Savior and His apostles spent their ministry teaching, healing and going to services with people who were obvious sinners lacking in doctrinal understanding. Does anyone think he or she is more righteous than our Savior and His apostles?

There are obvious limits regarding working with others. It is hard to fellowship with someone who worships on a different day. Our Savior found places where the attitude was so bad that He could accomplish little (Mark 6:2-5). But among Sabbatarians today, it seems that there are too many issues used as points of division instead of working together.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled (Matt 5:6).

Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God (Matt 5:9).
—Norman S. Edwards

It seems that one understanding or another regarding our Heavenly Father's holy name is spreading through the body of the Messiah. Not too long ago, I did an interesting study regarding the use of the Hebrew tetragramaton, יהוה. While understanding that the transliteration of that is something similar to "YHWH", I avoided the issue of what the vowel points should be and what is the proper pronunciation and/or spelling. On this last point there tends to be much controversy.

My study took me to the relevance of using the name, in whatever variant one chooses, on a day-to-day basis. I simply looked up the word "*name*" in the concordance and then deleted all the references to the "name of Samuel", "name of Jacob" or to a name of anyone other than our Creator. While it is common knowledge that the name "YHWH" or יהוה is in the Hebrew text thousands of times, references to "the name of יהוה" numbered around 340. Here are some of the more significant scriptures, in my opinion, that I came across. I have substituted the tetragramaton for the words "the LORD" and any other place where his name is actually used. (At times, a contraction or some other close variant is actually used but for simplicity, and at the expense of accuracy, I stuck with the main name.)

Gen 4:26—And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the *name* of יהוה.

Gen 21:33—And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the *name* of יהוה, the everlasting God.

Exod 3:15—And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, יהוה God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my *name* for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

Exod 6:3—And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the *name* of God Almighty, but by my *name* יהוה was I not known to them.

Exod 9:16—And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my *name* may be declared throughout all the earth.

Exod 15:3—יהוה is a man of war: יהוה is his *name*.

Exod 20:7—Thou shalt not take the *name* of יהוה thy God in vain; for יהוה will not hold him guiltless that taketh his

PRAISE Him! . . .

. . . AND His NAME?

by NORMAN ARTHUR

name in vain.

Exod 23:13—And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the *name* of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

Exod 34:5—And יהוה descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the *name* of יהוה.

Deut 5:11—Thou shalt not take the *name* of יהוה thy God in vain: for יהוה will not hold him guiltless that taketh his *name* in vain.

Deut 28:10—And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the *name* of יהוה; and they shall be afraid of thee.

Deut 32:3—Because I will publish the *name* of יהוה: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

1 Sam 17:45—Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the *name* of יהוה of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

2 Sam 7:26—And let thy *name* be magnified for ever, saying, יהוה of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.

1 King 3:2—Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the *name* of יהוה, until those days.

1 King 8:16-20—Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that my *name* might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel. And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the *name* of יהוה God of Israel. And יהוה said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my *name*, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my *name*. And יהוה hath performed his word that he spake, and I am

risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as יהוה promised, and have built an house for the *name* of יהוה God of Israel.

1 King 10:1—And when the queen of Sheba heard of the *name* of יהוה, she came to prove him with hard questions.

1 King 18:24—And call ye on the *name* of your gods, and I [Elijah] will call on the *name* of יהוה: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

1 Chr 16:8—Give thanks unto יהוה, call upon his *name*, make known his deeds among the people.

1 Chr 16:29—Give unto יהוה the glory due unto his *name*: bring an offering, and come before him: worship יהוה in the beauty of holiness.

1 Chr 17:24—Let it even be established, that thy *name* may be magnified for ever, saying, יהוה of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel: and let the house of David thy servant be established before thee.

2 Chr 7:14, 16, 20—If my people, which are called by my *name*, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.... For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my *name* may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.... Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my *name*, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations.

Job 1:21—And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: יהוה gave, and יהוה hath taken away; blessed be the *name* of יהוה.

Ps 5:11—But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy *name* be

joyful in thee.

Ps 8:9—O יהוה our Lord, how excellent is thy **name** in all the earth!

Ps 9:10—And they that know thy **name** will put their trust in thee: for thou, יהוה, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Ps 20:1—יהוה hear thee in the day of trouble; the **name** of the God of Jacob defend thee;

Ps 22:22—I will declare thy **name** unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Ps 34:3—O יהוה magnify יהוה with me, and let us exalt his **name** together.

Ps 44:20—If we have forgotten the **name** of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god;

Ps 54:1—Save me, O God, by thy **name**, and judge me by thy strength.

Ps 63:4—Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy **name**.

Ps 72:17—His **name** shall endure for ever: his **name** shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

Ps 79:6—Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy **name**.

Ps 83:18—That men may know that thou, whose **name** alone is יהוה, art the most high over all the earth.

Ps 86:12—I will praise thee, O יהוה my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy **name** for evermore.

Ps 92:1—It is a good thing to give thanks unto יהוה, and to sing praises unto thy **name**, O most High: (KJV)

Ps 99:3—Let them praise thy great and terrible **name**; for it is holy.

Ps 135:1—Praise ye יהוה. Praise ye the **name** of יהוה; praise him, O ye servants of יהוה.

(Note: There are over 90 of these references in just the book of Psalms.)

Prov 18:10—The **name** of יהוה is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Isa 25:1—O יהוה, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy **name**; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

Isa 26:8—Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O יהוה, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy **name**, and to the remembrance of thee.

Isa 42:8—I am יהוה: that is my **name**: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Isa 48:11—For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my **name** be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

Isa 56:6—Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to יהוה, to serve him, and to love the **name** of יהוה, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

Isa 63:16—Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O יהוה, art our father, our redeemer; thy **name** is from everlasting.

Jer 23:27—Which think to cause my people to forget my **name** by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my **name** for Baal.

Ezek 36:23—And I will sanctify my great **name**, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am יהוה, saith יהוה GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

Dan 2:20—Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the **name** of God for

ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:

Hosea 2:17—For I will take away the **names** of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their **name**. (Compare Exodus 23:13.)

Amos 9:6—It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: יהוה is his **name**.

Micah 4:5—For all people will walk every one in the **name** of his god, and we will walk in the **name** of יהוה our God for ever and ever.

Zeph 3:9—For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the **name** of יהוה, to serve him with one consent.

Mal 1:6—A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith יהוה of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my **name**. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy **name**?

Mal 3:16—Then they that feared יהוה spake often one to another: and יהוה hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared יהוה, and that thought upon his **name**.

I have only quoted about 56 passages here. It is interesting to note that we tend to look for at least two or three scriptures to support any given doctrine. We will, at times, be content with just one, like in the example of the foot washing in John 13.

With about 340 verses referring to, not just his name—יהוה, but also to the **name** of יהוה, it would seem rather clear that we are not only to praise him, but his holy name as well!

Praise ye יהוה. Praise, O ye servants of יהוה, praise the **name** of יהוה. Blessed be the **name** of יהוה from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same יהוה's **name** is to be praised.

Psalms 113:1-3

What All Are We To Do With His Name?

According to the abbreviated list of scriptures used in the article above, we are to do many things with the name of יהוה. We are to:

- ☞ Call upon his name.
- ☞ Give the glory due to his name.
- ☞ Exalt his name together.
- ☞ Sing praises unto his name.
- ☞ Praise his great and terrible name.
- ☞ Run into his name as a strong tower.
- ☞ Love his name.
- ☞ Walk in his name.
- ☞ Think upon his name.
- ☞ Not take his name in vain.
- ☞ Not forget his name.
- ☞ Not remember or speak another god's name in place of his.
- ☞ Not despise his name.

Examples also show us that not only holy men of the Bible, but our Father himself, יהוה, honored his name in many ways. What do we today, in modern Christianity, do regarding his name?

The ancient Hebrew Scriptures did not contain vowel pointing, so it was necessary for the Hebrew reader to recognize each word and know how to say it. This would be impossible in English since we have many totally unrelated words that have the same consonants. If we wrote “**bt**” without vowels, you could not tell if we meant “bat”, “bit”, “boat”, “boot” or something else. In Hebrew, it is **usually** possible to tell, but there are always unusual cases and exceptions. There are times when characters that normally represent consonants serve as vowels. (Even to this day, less-familiar readers in synagogues will use “cheat sheets” that have the vowel points included.)

At some time, it became the Jewish practice to say “*Adonai*” (meaning “Lord”) when they read the word YHVH in the scripture. The date when their pronunciation of The Name stopped is disputed, but it was at least several hundred years before Christ. It is possible that the practice began during their captivity in Babylon (500’s BC). Part of the reason was to “respect” The Name of the Ruler of the Universe. But another, probably

more important purpose was to prevent the name from being blasphemed among the Gentiles. If we think about how people curse and vainly use the names of God, Jesus, etc., today—is there not some merit to protecting the true pronunciation of our Creator’s name? Jeremiah 44:26 gives some evidence that this was intended:

Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: 'Behold, I have sworn by My great name,' says the LORD, 'that My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, "The Lord GOD [YHVH] lives.

Even though there is no official Jewish writing or position on how to pronounce the name, stories abound of rabbis that have secretly passed the pronunciation from one generation to the next. This would not be surprising, as much Jewish tradition has been passed that way for centuries. But for now, Orthodox Jews use *Adonai* in the synagogue and *HaShem*

Why Don't the Jews Pronounce His Name?

(“The Name”) in everyday conversation. But do they think it will always be that way? Notice this commentary from these standard Jewish works:

HASHEM will be one and His Name will be One. But does He not have One Name today? Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak taught: The world of the future will be unlike the world of today. In the world of today God's name is spelled one way and pronounced differently, whereas in the world of the future all will be One—the spelling and the pronunciation will both be Y–H–V–H (Talmud: Pesachim 50a).

This means that since we fail to perceive God's nature as it is expressed in the true pronunciation of His Name, we may not utter it. But in time to come, there will be no contradiction between perception and reality. (Art Scroll Siddur, p.81). 

Why I Use the Sacred Names

The names Yahuweh and Yahushua—are they necessary to use? Are they better than the title “God” or the name “Jesus”? If they are, should we not choose the better way? These are all questions we must **honestly and sincerely** answer. “...What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know?” Prov. 30:4.

In Exodus 20:7 we are told not to take the name of יהוה or YHWH in vain. Here, the Hebrew for “name” is “shem”. This verse is **not** saying, “Do not take the power or authority of YHWH in vain.”

When someone asks you for **your** name you don't answer with anything other than your appellation—what your parents **named** you. To make something vain is to make it of none effect, empty, meaningless, nothing. Along with not misusing His name, we are to **use** it respectfully, as in HalleluYAH—Praise you Yah.

In Acts 4:12 we are told that there is “**no other** name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” That statement makes it important to learn just **what name** it is that saves us. Mary was told to name her son Yahushua because He would save His people. The “He” is Yahuweh and the “save” in Hebrew is the “shua” part of the name. A fuller form might be “Yahuweh Hoshea”

that was commonly rendered Yahushua or Yahshua. (I am not a Hebrew scholar nor do I need to be.) These names have meaning, meaning that is lost or rendered less clear when we start to alter or make substitutions.

It seems that, in the last 2,000 or so years, something like the following happened with these names.

The Jews, in order to avoid the risk of mis-using His name, stopped using it completely and tried to hide it from the heathen so they would not profane it. This resulted in substitutions of the name יהוה with the title “LORD” or “GOD” which, when written, can be distinguished from “lord” and “god” but not when spoken. The Jews substitute “Adonai” or the term “HaShem” (the name) in order not to say it even though it remains as יהוה in their scrolls.

In Yahushua's time it was probably common to pronounce His name as “Yeshua” to avoid saying the short form of the Creator's name Yah or Yahu.

I have also read that after Yahushua's death the Jews would refer to Him as “Yeshu” and then the Greeks added an “s” to make the name masculine although I do not believe it was pronounced.

We now have “Jesus”. The Latin may have dropped the “s” and changed the Y to

I giving us “Jesu”. In the 16th century a printer invented the “J” and this was used to replace the “I”, i.e., “Jesu” although the “J” was still pronounced as a long “e” sound. The “s” found its way back onto the end and the “J” started to be pronounced as a soft “G” so that we have the “Jesus” of today.

Whether the above is accurate or not is really not that important. But the etymology is obvious in its beginning and end. The name of our savior, Yahushua ha Mashiach (the Messiah) has by a long series of circumstances been perverted into Jesus Christ (as if “Christ” was His last name and not Greek for “the anointed”).

Although I can find no proof of an intentional attempt to connect Jesus with “son of Zeus”, the similarity of sounds is suspicious. Let it suffice for me to say that I simply desire to throw out the recently invented “J”, the Latin and Greek influence and any of the other varyings from the original and to use the name of the Creator given to Moses and the name of our Redeemer given originally to Mary. The exact pronunciation is, in my opinion, not extremely important.

Our attitude in trying to eliminate error, accept the weight of evidence and try our best to choose the better way **is** of paramount importance.

That is why I use the Sacred Names!

—Mike Mastropaolo

Feast of Tabernacles 1997

Servants' News will again be hosting a Feast of Tabernacles this year, October 16-23 at the **Burr Oak Resort in the Southeast corner of Ohio.** Burr Oak Resort and Conference Center is one of the many nice resorts in the Ohio State Park system. It is located near Glouster, Ohio, 85 miles southeast of Columbus, Ohio and 35 miles northwest of Marietta, Ohio. The resort is situated in the 3,256 acre park in some of the State's most beautiful hill country and includes a 664 acre lake.

If you are interested in attending, please let us know as soon as possible.

Ohio University is having its "homecoming game" on the weekend during the Feast. This will not affect the available accommodations at the resort nor will it create any traffic there. However, it will make it difficult to get reservations at the less-expensive nearby motels. Accommodations at the state-park include:

Guest rooms: 1 double and 1 single bed, \$55 per night, up to 4 people.

Cottages: 2 bdrm, beds for 8, has kitchen, \$80 per night.

Full service campground: 20 minutes away, \$10 per night.

We have an interesting line-up of speakers, Bible studies and activities planned. There are a few dozen people who have already made reservations or indicated that they plan to attend.

We do not want people to miss out on the Feast site because it is too expensive. If you are interested in attending, but the price is too high, we would like to hear from you. We may be able to make arrangements so you can share a cabin, borrow a tent, or receive assistance for your own room. Please call us at 517-543-5544 or write to the address on the back. If you are interested in attending, but not ready to make reservations yet, we would also like to hear from you.

If this site proves to be too small or does not have enough inexpensive accommodations to suit the people who plan to attend, we **may** look for an additional site within a few hundred miles to help accommodate others.

You may make reservations directly by calling Burr Oak Lodge at 800-282-7275 and mentioning *Servants' News*.

Other Non-aligned sites:

Cornerstone Publications (Jim Rector) has selected the Marina Bay Resort at Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri for this year's Feast. Rooms are available at the resort and Knolls Condominiums. Rates: Studios, \$55 per night; Condos: 1-bdrm—\$65 per night, 2-bdrm—\$86 per night; 3-bdrm (Knolls only)—\$111 per night. All accommodations must be arranged through Marina Bay: 1-800-377-6274. For camping, call KOA: 1-800-562-7343.

United Christian Ministries (Ray Wooten) will again be in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, but in the Mills Auditorium. At least 10 motels are within easy walking distance at \$52 to \$100 per night. Workshops will be held and a live-band will attend for special music and entertainment. Call 888-985-9066.

A Church of God Ministry (Lon Lacey) has selected Albuquerque, New Mexico. See page 26 of December 1996 *Servants' News* for more details—over 100 people have already expressed interest. Call 505-822-8709.

Christian Educational Ministries (Ron Dart) will be at Kissimmee Civic Center in Southern Florida again this year with more music and workshops. Call 903-509-2999 for details.

Plans for several more non-aligned sites are being finalized. We will have information in the next issue.

WESTERN NON-ALIGNED SITE?

There are not many non-aligned Feast sites in the South-West or West. If you are interested in attending a non-aligned site in a secluded mountain resort about 45 minutes from Las Vegas, please contact *Servants' News*. If there is sufficient interest, there is someone willing to organize it. We will publish details in a future issue of *Servants' News*.

The Churches of God 1997 Feast Sites:

The Churches of God is a group of largely independent congregations, most of which were at one time a part of the *Church of God, International*. Their festival sites are open to anyone who will conduct themselves peaceably. Some sites may permit "outsiders" to serve in various ways, other sites may not. In general, TCG sites represent a middle ground between Non-Aligned sites and the ones sponsored by big organizations. For a congregation near you or general information about *The Churches of God*, call their information center at: 800-611-8080.

Daytona Beach, Florida. Contact Manuel Rojas, 1528 Ridge Ave, Holy Hill, FL 32117. 904-673-8324.

Destin, Florida. Contact Darryll Watson, 618 West Pine St, Mary Esther, FL 32569. 904-581-2820. E-mail: elder@cybertron.com.

Lake Texoma, Oklahoma. Contact Mike Anderson, 724 West Farm Rd, Springfield, Mo 65803. 417-833-9208.

San Antonio, Texas. Contact Julian Cruz, 219 Whitefield, San Antonio, TX 78223. 210-333-7229. E-mail: jcruz@ix.netcom.com.

Sunriver, Oregon. Contact Jeff Henderson, 85 Creekside Dr, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019. 415-726-3005.

TCG International Sites:

Australia. Contact Alan Kendall, 100 Nortcote St., Aberdare NSW 2325, 61-49-912525.

Canada. Contact Don Ducene, Collingwood, 68 Inshes Ave, Chatham, Ontario N7M 2Y7. 519-351-7978.

England. Contact James McBride, Filey, 23 Walcott Road, Billingham, Lincs LN4 3EG. 44-1526-860508. E-mail: COGUK@aol.com. ☐

Interested in Working More Effectively Within a Church Organization?

If your answer is, "yes," then you might want to obtain a copy of Craig White's paper: **Utilising the Laymembers in the Local Congregations and In the Work: A System to Ensure Fair Opportunity for All.** Craig attends the United Church of God, but this paper provides a lot of good information and ideas for any organization. See the back cover for how to obtain this paper.

The January 1997 Dallas Calendar Conference was attended by Herb Solinsky who, found several important mistakes in our article on the conference (Jan-Feb 1997 issue, beginning on page 3). We agree with all of the corrections listed here. Corrections use the following format:

Page #, Column #, Location in column

The corrected sentence occurs here indented with ~~the incorrect words struck out and the correct words added with underlines~~. Words may be added in brackets [like this] to make the meaning clear without referring back to the original article.

Any additional comments are added in this type style.

Page 4, column 2, near top:

The present [Jewish] calendar rules require the start of the year to be adjusted ('postponed') so that certain holy days do not fall on preparation days or ~~the Sabbath on a Sunday~~.

Page 4, column 2, middle:

He [Solinsky] believes new months should be started with the first observable crescent moon in Jerusalem, and that the year should begin with the first new moon ~~after on or after the day of~~ the spring equinox.

Also, based upon Gen 7:11, 24; 8:3-4; 1Sam 20, and knowing what modern astronomy reveals about the cycle of the moon, no month should have more than 30 days. Solinsky also believes that reliable witnesses for observing the new crescent should be accepted if they witnessed the crescent with the unaided eye from anywhere within the biblical boundaries of ancient Israel. In certain less common cases, other details may come into effect.

Page 4, column 2, below the middle:

In about 4 years out of ~~400~~ 19, he [Solinsky] believes that the Hebrew Calendar will be ~~off by a month~~ one month too early in this century.

The next year of this kind will be 1999.

Page 4, column 3, near top:

He [Solinsky] had ~~eclipse~~ new crescent sighting records and other primary historical sources showing when the year began—using the same calendar that ~~Daniel~~, Ezra, and Nehemiah were using.

Solinsky explained the historically verifiable relationship between Nisan 1 in the Babylonian calendar and the vernal equinox during the life of Ezra and Nehemiah when they used Babylonian month names in the context of Jerusalem in the Bible. He explained that translations of ancient cuneiform Babylonian inscriptions of new crescent sightings and eclipse records were corroborated (thus year-month-day dates were validated) by modern computer calculations.

After relating this historically verified information from 499 to 400 BCE, he

speculated that since Daniel and his three friends were high in the Babylonian government under multiple rulers, his knowledge of the proper calendar eventually had effects upon the Babylonian calendar that led to the latter's stabilization during the fifth century when Ezra and Nehemiah lived. During Daniel's lifetime (unless he lived somewhat beyond the age of 100) the Babylonian calendar was not yet stabilized, i.e., it did not yet maintain a fixed relationship between Nisan 1 and the vernal equinox.

Page 4, column 3, near top:

From 499 to 400 BC, the beginning month of the year was the first new moon ~~after the on or after the day of the~~ vernal equinox.

Page 5, column 2, top:

If the Eternal really intended for us to start the month with a crescent moon, then Russell's system will always be keeping the 'wrong days' because the true conjunction is always at least one day before the start of a month as determined by the first visible crescent.

Under unusual circumstances it is possible that on the same sundown-to-sundown day on which the conjunction occurs, the new crescent will be visible just before that day expires. Here is what would have to happen: (1) the moon is near its closest possible distance to the earth (so that the moon travels near its fastest velocity); (2) the azimuth difference between the moon and sun at sunset is near zero degrees; and (3) the conjunction occurs within a few hours after sundown. Note the 15.53 hour record for the earliest documented new crescent naked-eye sighting mentioned above. Even when this happens, the conjunction calendar will begin its month a day earlier than the first visible crescent calendar.

Page 5, column 2, top:

He [Russell] linked crescent moons to paganism, but had ~~little~~ no historical evidence that ancient Israel or the New Testament church ever kept (or could possibly keep) the calendar as he keeps it today.

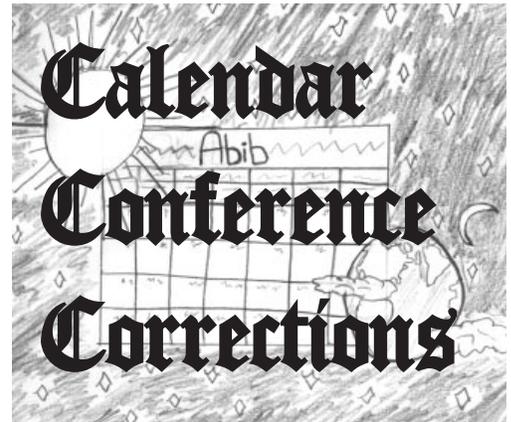
Page 5, column 3, bottom:

Due to the phenomenon known as the 'precession of the equinoxes', this method causes the calendar to become unsynchronized with the Earth's seasons a little more than ~~one day~~ fourteen days every thousand years.

A full cycle of precession of the equinoxes takes about 25,800 years.

$$\begin{aligned} & 365.25 \text{ days per year} \times 1000 \text{ years} \\ & \div 25,800 \text{ years for a cycle} \\ & = 14.16 \text{ days off per thousand years.} \end{aligned}$$

This shifting of the first month forward with respect to the agricultural year appears to violate the agricultural implications of Leviticus 23:39; Deuteronomy



16:9-10.

Page 6, column 2, bottom:

"Nelms advocated using the last visible crescent for starting a month. It is seen just before ~~sunset~~ sunrise, rather than just ~~before sunrise~~ after sunset."

Nelms system started a month with the sundown following the morning during which there is a first time failure to see the old crescent. This is the method used to begin a month in the old festal Egyptian calendar (in contrast to the ancient Egyptian civil calendar). Objections to this include: (1) Gen 1:14 states "lights" rather than the absence of light. (2) The Hebrew word for "new moon" (chodesh) has the same letters (excluding vowel points) as the Hebrew adjective and verb for "new" (chadash), and biblical contexts containing the latter imply "something" rather than "nothing". (3) The use of Babylonian month names in Ezra and Nehemiah in the context of Jerusalem is significant, and the Babylonian calendar began each month with the first visible crescent in the western sky near sunset, but not allowing any month to have more than 30 days. (4) The Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria (lived about 17 BCE to 50 CE), who led a delegation to Rome in 38 CE which represented the Jewish people in Egypt, explicitly wrote that the Jewish people begin their months when the moon first becomes visible after the conjunction.

Page 7, column 1, near bottom:

Yet, we find millions of Jews spread around the world keeping an imperfect calendar, ~~yet all~~ and assembling together on the same days."

This statement fails to acknowledge that there are Jews today known as Karaites who celebrate the holy days based on a natural calendar rather than the current Jewish calendar. In recent decades their population has tripled due to mainstream Jews adopting Karaitic principles. They primarily exist in Israel, Europe, and the United States. They have rejected the Talmud and are not doctrinally united. During World War II, Hitler was misled into thinking that they were not Jews, so he did not mistreat the Karaites as he did the other Jews. ☞

Can an Astronomical New Moon Be Seen by “EARTHSHINE?”

Some calendar systems use an astronomical new moon or conjunction to begin each month. This event occurs when the moon is closest to the straight line between centers of the Earth and Sun. Today, this event is possible to calculate mathematically with a high degree of precision. **Historical evidence indicates that this calculation could not be performed until about 330 BC.**

“The months beginning with the conjunction will be called *exact lunar months* or *conjunction months*. These months are a theoretical construction; they could not be used in practice in classical times, because before Kallippos (330 B.C.) astronomers were not able to predict the true conjunction.” (B.L. van der Waerden, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol 80, 1960, p. 169, “Greek Astronomical Calendars and Their Relation to the Athenian Civil Calendar”).

There can be up to three successive nights between the last old crescent and the first new crescent (see reference, above). Without the ability to calculate the true conjunction, there is no way a person could know which day is the astronomical new moon. How then, can anyone justify using a calculated calendar system today that we know could not have been used by the righteous men of the Bible? The answer that has sometimes been put forth is “earthshine.” Is it possible to actually observe the astronomical new moon by earthshine?

Because earthshine is not light from the sun to the moon to the observer on earth, but instead is light from the sun to the earth to the moon to the observer on earth (a double reflection from the sun rather than a single reflection from the sun), it is observed as a faint dark blue-gray color rather than white. Earthshine does not have the shape of a crescent, but instead fills out the remaining part of a circle beyond the crescent. Earthshine together with the crescent make a full circle. As the crescent is being observed and twilight grows darker, it becomes easier to see earthshine, but sometimes earthshine will not be seen at all when the crescent is seen, especially when the moon sets during the early part of twilight. **This is my personal observation, yet pic-**

tures and brief discussions in astronomy books corroborate my sightings.

Claims have been made that ancient observers could see earthshine during the astronomical new moon (conjunction) due to the lack of air pollution and the lack of lights from cities. (My comment for now is that if a person travels far from city lights, light effect is canceled, so the only issue of difference between today and anciently is air pollution.)

In order to evaluate claims about observing earthshine during the conjunction, one must first note that when the time of conjunction arrives, the time in Jerusalem may be night, daytime, or twilight. When it is night in Jerusalem during conjunction, the moon is between (although not exactly “between” except during an eclipse) the earth and sun, and Jerusalem is hidden in darkness on the side of the earth not facing the sun and moon, so it is certainly not even imaginable that someone in Jerusalem could see earthshine. When it is daytime in Jerusalem during conjunction (assuming it is not a total solar eclipse, which is very rare), the angle from the sun to Jerusalem to the moon is less than 6 degrees so the brightness of the visible sun, being so close to the moon, will surely block out the faint earthshine. The cases of conjunction during night and daytime from Jerusalem constitute the vast majority of times of conjunction.

The last choice to consider is twilight from Jerusalem during conjunction. Here the circle of the sun is always slightly below the horizon and only some of the time the moon is slightly above the horizon, yet the angular separation between sun and moon is less than 6 degrees. The moon’s crescent is too small to see at this time because the world’s record for a documented shortest time for seeing a new crescent after conjunction with the unaided human eye is 15.53 hours (Sky and Telescope, vol. 92, December 1996, page 104; since the observation was made near the Mauna Kea Observatory in Hawaii, it was at a very high altitude and hence not likely to have been seen near sea level). The difficulty in seeing the new crescent at conjunction has nothing to do with air pollution, but instead the dif-

ficulty involves too thin a bent hair of reflected light to be detectable by the human eye with the twilight glare from the sun still significant. It is this same twilight glare that should hinder seeing the full circle of faint earthshine. While **lack of air pollution** helps one to see earthshine, **this same lack of air pollution also increases twilight**

glare which hinders seeing earthshine. These two effects of lack of pollution are likely to cancel each other, unless we are near a major center of air pollution. Thus I am not convinced that ancient observations of earthshine would have been easier when compared to places of today that are far from city lights and major centers of pollution. **It should be emphasized that this discussion is only relevant to the time of conjunction in Jerusalem when it is early twilight;** at other times of conjunction in Jerusalem it is not imaginable to consider seeing earthshine (except during a total solar eclipse).

I have examined about two dozen astronomy books concerning earthshine, and they all take it for granted that the observer is looking for earthshine at a time when the crescent is already visible. In Sky and Telescope, volume 42, August 1971, page 78, Joseph Ashbrook wrote the following below a photograph of a crescent moon showing earthshine, “A 29-hour-old crescent moon is setting behind trees a mile away in this photograph taken on January 17, 1961, at Mount Pinos, California, by Alan McClure of Los Angeles. When the moon is much nearer new [i.e., the conjunction], naked-eye viewers never see the earthshine because the twilight glow is too bright.” Joseph Ashbrook authored the regular column in Sky and Telescope titled “Astronomical Scrapbook” until his death in 1980. From his statement it is clear that he did not believe that earthshine was visible at or very near conjunction.

During a total solar eclipse, which is only observable from a small portion of the earth’s surface, it is possible to see a conjunction by earthshine (article “Eclipse Earthshine” by Bradley E. Schaefer, Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, vol. 103, pages 315-316, March 1991).

In summary, there are no documented cases of anyone seeing a conjunction by earthshine without an eclipse. Even if atmospheric conditions were at one time better, Earthshine would not have been a reliable way to determine the beginning of months.
—Herb Solinsky

The foundation for coming into a personal fellowship (rather than a superficial relationship) with the Son of God is to grasp and accept the “Living Word” of God.

The written word of God has been specifically designed to lead us into the “Living Word.” We need to know that this written Word is actually what it declares itself to be, a Revelation from God to us. “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man’s life and training him in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of His work” (2Tim 3:16-17, J.B. Phillips).

Holy Spirit Makes It Live

There is an important distinction that needs to be recognized here, and that is the written Word must be understood though the Holy Spirit in order for it to be the Living Word (John 16:13), otherwise it is just doctrine rather than Life. This understanding must be in the spoken and written Word, as well as in the hearing, and it is the primary function of God’s Holy Spirit to give us Life. “It is the Spirit [that] gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the [anointed] words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and are Life” (Jn 6:63, NAS throughout). Jesus also amplified this distinction in John 7:16-18; “...My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man is willing to do His will he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself. **He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory, but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true and there is no unrighteousness in Him.**”

Consider this: A person of superior intellect could memorize and recall the entire written Word—the Bible—and could teach these words, even if he was not a believer. But if these words are not “anointed” by the Holy Spirit, then they are just doctrine (teaching) and not Life. They may very well be valuable for the daily living of human beings but they are not Life giving, because Jesus Christ is Life, and the Holy Spirit is revealing Life to us through the anointing of the written Word.

The Living Word

by Jerry Laws

This statement brings us to the point of focusing on a specific example. Many people seem to have a problem with seeing and accepting the Living Word on this point. It is the promised privilege of all Christians, we are told, to be “taught of God” (Jn 6:45, citing Isa 54:13) and it is the Spirit of God who teaches them. Then why is it so difficult for us to accept what He says to us in I John 2:27: “...you have no need for anyone to teach you, but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and not a lie...”

A key here is to accept and apply the statements, “Ask and you shall receive” (Mt 7:7-11, 21:22; Mk 11:24; Js 1:5). We can certainly ask for the anointing of the spirit to teach us.

I wondered about this situation and have concluded that part of the problem stems from the sheer quantity of technical information about the Bible which modern Christianity possesses today. With so many books written “about” the Bible by scholars and others, and with the easy accessibility of information available via computer Bible software, which now includes the “Internet”, it makes it difficult to focus on simply spiritual matters such as I John 2:27. The believer today, who may have a desire for God, has such a vast maze of information to filter through, they may very well end up much like the Jews of Jesus’ and Paul’s day, “...having a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom 10:2). The assumption (as demonstrated by daily practice) that a person cannot study the Bible effectively without a mass of technical theological equipment is false, and is a slap in the face of the Living Word, for it was the Spirit who taught all things to the apostles (Jn 14:26, 16:13; I Cor 2:10, 13) and is the same anointing that teaches all of Christ’s people, according to I John 2:27.

Please do not misunderstand. **I’m not belittling technical Biblical scholarship**, as it does have its place. But, it is our God who has inspired and put together the Holy Bible, its authority and its messages for all His people for

all time.

A friend of mine once gave me another reason why it is so difficult for fellow believers to trust the Holy Spirit to teach us and that is, “Most of us are prejudiced, lazy and unprepared for the exercise of the Spirit, and for the conscience that it involves.” This is truly a painful statement when applied to the self, but it seems so easy to trust in others and even pay for this mass of information (Christianity is big business today!) than it is to trust in the Living Word.

Understanding the Adversary

On another related example; not only does the Bible reveal God to mankind, His purpose and plan for us, as well as the history of His dealing with His chosen people (whom we are), but it also reveals to us God’s adversary—Satan. Most importantly, it reveals the fact that Christ “has already overcome the adversary!” Therefore we must know that our redemption is “In Christ Jesus,” not as a doctrine, not as a philosophy, but as an actual redemption out of Satan’s authority.

However, it is folly for Christians to think they are automatically immune from the spiritual realm of Satan, for as human beings we live in his domain—the earth. A believer need not dwell on the adversary, nor should we be ignorant of him, but should come to accept the reality of the adversary and also understand how he functions, according to the the Scriptures, rather than through myth or superstition. This is foundational to understanding and accepting our deliverance out of his authority.

The existence of Satan is taught in 7 Old Testament books and by every New Testament writer, therefore, a very brief discussion of Satan is in order at this point.

First of all, Satan’s domain is the whole world and his mission is to deceive all who dwell upon it (Rev 12:9; 2Cor 4:4). He has declared war on the Saints, (Dan 7:21; Rev 13:7) and therefore, his primary goal is to deceive

the very elect, and to accomplish this, he works primarily through human instruments within the religious world, including the church. (Mat 7:15-16, 13:38-39, 24:24; Acts 20:29-30) Satan is a master counterfeiter, and his messages appear to us as very appealing and good, even very Godly (2Cor 11:13-15). His methods are very subtle (2Cor 11:3). He controls the air waves, and broadcasts his spiritual signals continuously, searching for all who may have their receivers opened up to his signals. (Eph 2:2). These signals come to our minds as powerful spiritual thoughts (Eph 6:16) and as such, they continue to work on us until we may even accept them as our own thoughts and are therefore more agreeable to us. **Some of the ways a person is deceived are included in the following Scriptures:** 1Cor 3:18, 6:9, 15:33; Gal 6:7; Jms 1:22, 26.

With all this authority and power, is it any wonder that this world, and the religions in it, are in such a state of confusion and turmoil? How then is a believer, who lives out his human life on the earth, supposed to overcome all the schemes of the adversary? The goal is that "... they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will" (2Tim 2:26). The answer is "In Christ Jesus!" and the Living Word—this is the only way.

When Christ was on the earth, shortly after His baptism and before He began His public ministry, He confronted the Adversary, who had all spiritual authority on the earth. (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13) We are given only the briefest summary of this encounter, but two things should be observed here: First, this encounter with Satan had to take place early on because the Adversary had spiritual control on the earth, and therefore had the authority to offer all that he did to Jesus. Second, because Jesus knew the magnitude of this encounter, He did not try to take Satan on by Himself, but totally trusted, and therefore yielded Himself to the Holy Spirit to build Him up—for 40 days. The outcome was that Satan was defeated in this battle of the spiritual realm for control on the earth, and this was before Jesus' crucifixion. This is why those early disciples, who were given the temporary gifts of power (before Pentecost) had authority, "In Christ Jesus," over Satan's spiritual realm on earth (Lk 9 and 10). "...Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (Lk 10:17).

Redeemed in Christ

So what does this mean for the believer today?

"For all (each and every one of us) have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). However, the Bible goes on to say in verse 24,

"...being justified as a gift, by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." In Christ, we believers have all been redeemed out of the authority of Satan, and all believers are in Christ (whether they are aware of it or not) because that is where the Father has placed us: "By His [the Father's] doing you are in Christ Jesus...who became...[our] redemption" (1Cor 1:30).

This is past tense, we already have received redemption, "In Christ." "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph 1:7).

The Word says to us all in Galatians 1:4, "...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." We believers must come to know (acknowledging and also appropriating the truth into our daily lives) that our redemption is in Christ Jesus, not as a doctrine, not as a philosophy, but as an actual redemption out of Satan's authority.

The written Word of God says so, therefore it is true! Believe it! The Living Word will tell us the same thing:

"The Spirit of truth, [which] the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it]; but you know [it], for [it] dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:17). 

"King James Only" from page 1

levelled at **all** other translations, including the Revised Standard Version and the New King James Version.

During the last few months, **these ideas have been accepted by a number of Sabbath-keeping individuals and groups.** It is understandable that people desire to have one single book that could be relied upon to be the single source of inspired Scripture. As people make the transition from believing what "their minister" tells them to believing what the Bible and holy spirit teach them, the great variety of variant translations can be intimidating. It would be much easier if there were one single translation that was always right—but desire does not make truth.

There are verses where the King James is translated better than any other version that we know of, but we believe other translations are better than the KJV in some cases. Some of the verses about which the "King James Only" movement seems to be most adamant are verses that Sabbatharians would consider to be wrong. For example, Mrs. Riplinger was quite adamant about the following three topics:

1. Passages in the modern translations, they say, water down the doctrine of the Trinity. Virtually all translations

besides the KJV leave out part of 1 John 5:7-8, or at least make note that it is a doubtful text:

For there are three that bear record in heaven, *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.* ⁸*And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

"King James Only" advocates tend to make inclusion of this passage a "test" of the orthodoxy of a translation! Whether or not those words were written by John is irrelevant because they believe the King James translation process was "inspired." Yet most Sabbatharians who do not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity have long since made a note in the margins of their King James Bibles that this passage was "not in the original text."

2. The modern translations, they say, present a system of "works-salvation" in the way certain passages are rendered. In fact, some of these passages are ones that Sabbatharians would use to show that "faith without works is dead."

We have included a table below from page 256 of Mrs. Riplinger's book. Under each "New Version" word choice is **her comment** [in brackets] on how this implies an "active" salvation by works. Under the KJV word choice is **her com-**

ment on how “passive” the KJV makes the role of the believer. While we believe that salvation is a gift, we believe the “New Versions” do a much better job of translating the Greek to show the active role of the believer.

New Version	Passage	KJV
persevere [work]	Rom 5:4; 2Cor 12:12	patience [wait]
endurance [endurance]	Heb 10:36 2Cor 6:4	patience [patience]
steadfast [don't mess up]	Col 1:23	settled [resting]
if we endure [if we made it]	2Tim 2:12	suffer [if we suffer]
to remain true [don't mess up]	Acts 11:23	cleave unto [rely on Him]
are protected by the power of God [Is God a body guard?]	1Pet 1:5	are kept... [God keeps you]
confidence of our hope [I 'hope' I make it!]	Heb 10:23	profession of our faith

3. The “King James Only” movement also claims that modern translations pervert the “orthodoxy” of the King James Bible put there by the “orthodox” translators of 1611. They claim modern translators are “heretics,” some of them even homosexuals who were secretly accepted into translation teams and who thus “watered down” the Biblical injunctions against homosexuality.

Yet the Anglican translators of the KJV 1611 held many beliefs considered unbiblical by most Sabbatarians. They rejected the Sabbath! They also believed in a hierarchical church system, infant baptism and an ever-burning hell. They considered most Sabbatarians heretics and put them out of their church, which often meant the loss of one’s job and friends in those days!

In addition, King James laid down several “stipulations” to the translation team. One of them was that the old ecclesiastical words were to be kept. Hence we find the Catholic term “bishop” where “overseer” would be a better translation; “church” where “congregation” would be more accurate; and “deacon”, “minister” and “servant” from a single Greek word that should be rendered “servant.”

Another one of King James’ stipulations was that there would be no notes or variant readings. His main reason for producing the “Authorized Version” was to reduce the amount of controversy over what the scriptures said. Unfortunately, if the translators were uncertain about a meaning, they had no way to convey alternate meanings to the readers. (Notes found in KJV Bibles today have been added well after 1611). All of this indicates that the transla-

tors of 1611, no matter how noble in their purpose, were not completely unfettered in their translation.

As for the issue of homosexuality, we have seen comments by a spokesman of the translation committee of the NIV that one scholar, consulted about English style during the writing process, later revealed her sexual orientation as a lesbian. But we have seen no evidence that this individual had any part in translating passages dealing with homosexuality. And, in fact, it would be difficult to see how the NIV could be considered “soft” on homosexuality. The passage in Leviticus that prescribes the death penalty for homosexual acts is fully intact in the NIV.

These accusations that the homosexuality of someone connected with a modern translation might influence the translation are also a bit surprising because many historical sources present a convincing argument that King James I of England, the one who “commissioned” the 1611 edition, was **himself** a homosexual! This charge is levelled not only by modern writers. Even the 1911 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, noted for it’s historical accuracy, put it discreetly:

His undignified appearance was against him, and so were his garrulity, his Scottish accent, his slovenliness and his toleration of disorders in the court, but above all, his favour for handsome male favourites, whom he loaded with gifts and caressed with demonstrations of affection which laid him open to vile suspicions.

In spite of this, it doesn’t seem that the KJV translators watered down the passages condemning homosexuality either. Just as in the modern translations, the Levitical condemnation of homosexual acts is clear and uncompromising.

The writings of Mrs. Riplinger and others of the “King James Only” movement rely on particularly “sensationalized” claims. The word “conspiracy” sells books now-a-days in the same way “natural” on the label of food appeals to many shoppers. But, just as much that is labeled “natural” in the grocery is **not** very natural, some things that are labeled “conspiracy” may need much closer inspection to determine the truth of the allegations.

Part of the reason books like Mrs. Riplinger’s are accepted as well as they are is because too many people know very

King James laid down several “stipulations” to the translation team.

little about **how** Bible translation is done. In their popular writings, the “King James Only” folks set up the King James Bible, **not** the Greek or Hebrew texts from which the translations were made, as the standard of comparison. Thus, they can show a chart in which a KJV passage is posted on one side

and a modern translation of the passage on the other. This can make it **appear** that the modern translation has “left out” key words or passages from “the Bible.” For example, Matthew 17:21 is not in the NIV or NRSV. That sounds sinister. But when we realize that this verse is not found in most ancient manuscripts, but was apparently later copied from Mark 9:29, then its deletion makes sense. Most new versions will note this in a foot-note.

Many sincere Christians are under the false impression that **somewhere** there is one perfect copy of “the original

Hebrew and Greek Biblical writings” from which the KJV and the other translations are produced. And thus whatever shows up in the KJV, should also show up in all other translations.

But this “single document” assumption is totally in error. All Biblical translators must work with a **collection** of a number of ancient manuscript (hand-written) copies—copies of copies—of the original writings of the Bible. If you have ever tried to copy a long document by hand, perhaps you can understand how, over a period of thousands of years, variations have crept into these copies. No two are **exactly** alike. Thus, Bible translators must compare and contrast all the available documents at their disposal, and try to discern which variation of a particular word or passage most likely represents the original document.

These variations are, in most cases, extremely minor—the equivalent of a misplaced comma or a transposed pair of letters in a modern document. But in a limited number of cases, there are passages that are debatable. It is in these areas that the KJV and many modern translations are in disagreement. Some of these disagreements may be because archaeology in the past 350 years has provided more ancient texts to consider. Some may be because studies of ancient languages have changed the opinion of scholars on what certain Greek or Hebrew expressions **really** meant. And some disagreements may be caused just by the basic assumptions each translation team decided to adopt.

For instance, each team must decide whether to “go with” the rendering of a passage that shows up in the largest **number** of manuscripts they have to work from, regardless of the age of those manuscripts. Another team may decided to “go with” the rendering of a passage as it appears in the **most ancient** of the manuscripts, even if those are in the minority.

After translators have decided which Greek or Hebrew words they will use to translate from, they must decide how to render expressions or words that can have multiple meanings. Look up the word “run” in an English dictionary. Would a foreign language have a single word that encompasses the dozens of definitions given for this word? No. A person translating “run” to another language would have to determine the meaning of “run” from its context and decide which of many foreign language words to use. Similarly, Bible translators must choose an English word to represent Greek and Hebrew words with multiple meanings. Sometimes, translators do make decisions on how to render a word based on their overall understanding of the Bible—on their perception of doctrine. Translations made by a single individual or organization, have a high tendency to reflect that individual’s or organization’s doctrines. Translations made by large groups of people from many religious backgrounds (like the NIV) tend to be more doctrinally neutral.

When selecting a Bible to study, one of the most helpful things you can find are Bibles that include translator’s notes on alternate textual readings or possible alternate meanings.

Some modern translations are very good in this regard. Some translations have a “study” edition which contains far more notes than their standard edition—well worth the extra cost for the serious Bible student.

If you would like to know more about the process of translation, and how it affects this controversy regarding the “King James Only” arguments, we recommend you obtain a copy of the book:

The King James Only Controversy—Can You Trust Those Modern Translations? by James R. White; © 1995; Bethany House Publishers; Minneapolis MN 55438.

We have found it a helpful introduction to the topic. If you have read Mrs. Riplinger’s book, and have found her arguments persuasive, we particularly hope you will give this book serious consideration before you make conclusions about the issue. Mr. White writes in the introduction to this book:

It is very important to understand the motivation behind this book. This book is not being written to push one particular translation of the Bible over another. There is no desire to get everyone to read the NASB, or the NIV, or the NKJV, or the RSV, or any other “modern” translation. On the other hand, I am not in any way seeking to stop those who use the KJV from reading that venerable translation. This book is not against the KJV. I know many fine Christian people who use the KJV and for whom the

Translations made by a single individual or organization, have a high tendency to reflect that individual’s or organization’s doctrines.

translation works just fine. However, I do oppose those who would force others to use the KJV or risk God’s wrath for allegedly questioning His Word. I oppose KJV Onlyism, not the KJV itself.

We at *Servants’ News* are in agreement with Mr. White’s final conclusion regarding the matter:

We strongly encourage Christians to purchase and use multiple translations of the Bible so that comparison can be made between translations. It is best not to be limited to just one translation when studying scripture. Cross-reference between such fine translations as the New King James Version, the NASB and the NIV will allow the student of the Bible to get a firm grasp upon the meaning of any passage.

We hope that no one will throw up their hands and be discouraged because there is no “certain” Bible translation. The fundamental principles of the rewarding of good, the punishment of evil, the ten commandments, the sermon on the mount, and salvation through our Savior, are clear in any major translation.

—Pam Dewey & Norman Edwards

Common Modern Translations

NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version

PASSOVER: Questions and Answers

—A Detailed Explanation of 1 Corinthians 11—

After the Passover article in the previous issue, we received a number of letters, e-mails and phone calls. They were split about evenly in thirds: one third agreeing, one third disagreeing and another third asking questions. Rather than publish all of the letters, many of which were similar, we will reply to each subject, including points from the letters on the subject. Also, we apologize for the parts of our article that were unclear.

We begin our answers to questions with 1 Corinthians 11 since our explanation of that passage is probably the most “different” of the things that we have published. Where did this conclusion come from? Primarily from prayer, reading the text of the chapter with an open mind, and through an effort to understand the background of the original Corinthian readers. This understanding did not come from reading Bible commentaries! If others have come to similar conclusions, we are unaware of them. Do we feel this understanding is infallible? No! It is simply the best we can do with existing scripture.

We believe the Passover lamb was historically killed on the afternoon of Nisan 14, that it was eaten on the night of the 15th, and that the Israelites were delivered from Egypt that same night. We believe brethren today should still get together on the night of the 15th to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt and to tell the story of their own personal deliverance from sin—teaching their children the meaning of all these things. We believe brethren should take bread and wine as symbols of our Savior’s sacrifice on this night.

Also, we believe that our Savior met with His apostles for his “last supper” on the night of Nisan 14 where they took bread and wine. He explained the full meaning of the bread and wine for the first time: These symbols represent His body and His blood. Our Savior also explained the need for His suffering and the need for his followers to be servants to mankind. We believe that these lessons were well-taught by “Church of God” groups for many years on this night, even though some explanations were not properly correlated with the Old Testament.

We believe both of the above practices should be continued. The difficulty this creates is: “How can we take bread and wine more than once per year?” When we examined Scripture and history, we found that bread and wine were already in common use as religious symbols, and that is why there is no explanation given for their use at times other than the Passover. **We had to bring up this issue in our Passover article in order to explain why it was acceptable for Christ and his Apostles (and our congregations, today) to take bread and wine at times other than the Passover.**

We are not now recommending that congregations use bread and wine every

week, though we believe it was a practice of first-century congregations. We believe we already understand some of the value in it, but we would like to give the subject more study before writing. **It will never replace Passover or any other holy days!** We do not even use a specific name to refer to non-Passover bread and wine use because the Bible does not clearly assign one. We do not think it helpful to appropriate Catholic, Protestant or Jewish names because they convey numerous ideas that are not in the Bible. **So, in this article, we will simply discuss the taking of bread and wine as symbols—for Passover and at other times as well.**

We realize that this is difficult for many people, because they were taught that “Christ changed the symbols of the Passover from a lamb to unleavened bread and wine.” Well, unleavened bread was a part of Passover from the beginning (Ex 12:8). It is possible that wine was added to the Passover service shortly afterward, but we have no direct Biblical record of it. We do have a lot of Bible evidence and available history to indicate that bread and wine were used as symbols to honor the Eternal long before our Savior’s last supper.

Bread and Wine Used in the Old Testament

The first recorded incident is Abraham’s return from defeating Chedorlaomer.

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen 14:18-19).

Mentioning the bread and wine in the context of being a priest and giving a blessing shows that this was a symbolic

act. Abraham was not lacking food—his troop had recovered food among the possessions and had eaten some of it (v 24). The exact meaning Abraham derived out of this is not stated, but the details brought out here show that bread and wine were symbols of communication between the Eternal and his worshippers.

Many do not realize it, but unleavened bread and wine were offered every day in Israel with the morning and evening sacrifices (Ex 29:38-42). These scriptures mention “oil” and “flour”, but other instructions for “grain offerings” show that the two were mixed to make unleavened bread (Lev 2:1-10). This bread and wine combination was required for most other sacrifices (Num 15:1-16). Some of the bread and wine were poured on the fire, but some of it was consumed by people. Did they understand that this was looking forward to the body and the blood of the Messiah? The Old Testament does not record anyone with that understanding, and the apostles certainly did not understand it until our Savior taught them.

Historical Use of Bread and Wine

Many Orthodox Jews today frequently say a blessing over bread and wine in their synagogue services, at the beginning of their Sabbath meals, on holy days, at weddings and at other special occasions. Some Jews understand that these symbols represent the blessings that God has given man from the Earth. But a few believe that these symbols look forward to the Messiah—though they would not say they specifically represent his “body” and “blood.” How long have religious Jews been using bread and wine in their services? Various sources estimate a variety of dates, but almost all of them are well before the time of Christ. The oldest written records of which this writer is aware

are from the fourth century, but they refer to Jewish religious use of bread and wine as an already well-established practice. We can find little ancient history (either Jewish or Christian) that claims Jews **were not** using bread and wine in their services at the time of Christ. We know for certain that wine was an essential part in weddings in the first century (John 2:1-11).

This writer believes that Jewish historical records (Mishna, Talmud, etc.) are subject to human bias and error, just like many other historical works. When they are in conflict with other reliable history or in conflict with the Bible, we do not accept them. But when they appear reasonable and do not conflict with other ancient documents, there seems to be no more reason to doubt them than we would doubt any other history.

Furthermore, the Jewish blessings said over wine contain identical phrases to those in the New Testament: “fruit of the vine” (Luke 22:18) and “cup of blessing” (1Cor 10:16). Given the animosity between Jews and Christians during the first few centuries, it is difficult to believe that Jews would have taken “Christian” bread and wine symbols and begun to use them. However, the situation **does** make sense if we conclude that the frequent use of bread and wine was common among religious Jews before Christ. The Jews continued their tradition as they always had done, and those who believed Christ continued using bread and wine—understanding it represented the body and blood of their savior. The tradition was important enough that Paul instructed the part-Gentile Corinthian congregation to carry on this tradition in I Corinthians 11.

Unfortunately, the “Christian” use of bread and wine turned into a priestly-administered **sacrament** by the Roman Catholic and various Orthodox churches. **By 325 AD, all connection with Passover or Jewish tradition was lost.** Through the centuries, most non-Catholic Christians (including Sabbatarians) used bread and wine either once or only a few times per year, trying to avoid practices that appeared to be Catholic or Jewish. Today, nearly all “Christian” groups teach that Jesus did away with the Passover (most of the Old Testament, actually) and instituted a “Lord’s supper” or holy communion.

Today, most “Church of God” groups believe that 1 Corinthians 11 is either

directly about the Passover or about a meal that our Savior used to instruct the disciples in the way to keep the Passover.

Explanation of 1 Corinthians 11

This writer believes that **the use of Passover bread and wine is included in 1 Corinthians 11**, but that there is no other way to explain the chapter without understanding a broader use of bread and wine. It appears Paul is teaching the continuance of one of the good Jewish traditions (plenty of not-so-good ones are expounded in Matthew 23)—important enough to be taught to a partly gentile congregation in Corinth. The instruction applies to the symbolic taking of bread and wine at all times—**but is especially important for the Passover!**

The following seven points show why this writer believes 1 Corinthians 11 applies to taking bread and wine at other times, as well as the Passover:

1. The Passover or Days of Unleavened Bread **are not mentioned** in or near this chapter. Paul does not even use the Greek word for “unleavened” here, but uses the common word for bread. While chapter 5 and chapter 16:8 make it likely that the book was written to arrive for the Days of Unleavened Bread, most of the subjects of the book are year-round concerns (sectarianism, going to court with brethren, marriage, meat offered to idols, funding evangelism, spiritual gifts, love, conducting services, speaking in tongues, etc).

2. 1 Corinthians 11:2 clearly begins a new section that is labeled “tradition.” Frequently, Paul spells out his authority for his statements: sometimes he quotes the Scripture, sometimes he references Christ and sometimes he says it is his own judgement. Here, he mentions traditions, and the next four chapters cover items mainly relating to worship services. There was little in the Old Testament about the subject, and Christ and the Apostles spent their early ministry preaching in the Temple and synagogues, so there was little experience there. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 are understandable in this context of traditions, just as are head-coverings, spiritual gifts, speaking in tongues, and other instructions about services.

3. Five times, this chapter used the expression “when you come together” (verses 17, 18, 20, 33, 34). The Greek word is *sunerchomai* in every case. It is

also used in chapter 14, verses 23 and 26, and numerous other places in scripture. It definitely refers to people coming together. Verse 18 says “come together as a church” and 20 says “come together in one place.” It is hard to imagine what words Paul could have used to more clearly state that he was referring to **all of the Corinthian’s services.**

4. Verses 17 through 22 are all the same paragraph. These paragraph breaks are in the Greek manuscripts. It unquestionably links “coming together as a church” and the “Lord’s supper” issue. Were people saying “I’m of Apollos” (1Cor 1:12) only at Passover? Obviously, sectarianism was a continual problem.

5. The problems of drunkenness and shaming those who do not have as much to eat must be on-going problems. If Paul were writing this just before the holy days, then would not he say “last year some of you got drunk”? How could people be shamed by not having enough food only once per year—could not they save up for it? These verses are understandable if we realize that Paul is telling them to take symbolic bread and wine regularly, but not try to imitate the entire last supper of our Savior (v 20).

6. In verses 23-26 we find the reference to “the night he was betrayed,” but it says nothing at all about doing something on this night or commemorating that night in any way. Paul is simply filling in **how and when** the full meaning of this practice was explained. It was “that night” when the apostles first learned that the bread and wine used throughout history (Abraham, sacrifices, etc.) represented their Savior’s body and blood. Paul did not choose a Greek expression that meant “annually” in verse 26, but one (like our English “often”) that has no specific frequency—exactly what we would expect if he were referring to bread and wine taken on the Sabbath’s, holy days, weddings, and other special occasions.

7. Some people insist that taking bread and wine symbols often “would cheapen it and cause it to lose its meaning.” To some degree, that is true. People do pay a lot more attention to something that they do once per year as opposed to weekly or even more often. Most Sabbatarian groups that take bread and wine once per year are very serious about it. But this further demonstrates that the Corinthians were taking bread and wine often—they were not examining them-

selves and taking it in a worthy manner. Hence, Paul's admonition in verses 27-34 was necessary.

Is this a Matter of Salvation?

A natural reaction to this explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 is: "I know that the Eternal has worked powerfully in my life, how could I be missing something like this for so long?" We must realize that Paul calls this a tradition in verse 2—it is not a requirement for salvation. Those Corinthians who were getting sick or dying were doing so because of their attitude, not because they were failing to take bread and wine often enough. Most of the "Church of God" groups today have been extremely solemn when they take it once-per-year. This is probably better than doing it often without the proper respect. The Passover, of course, is a special time unlike any other, because it marks our Savior's death and our deliverance from sin. We must eat unleavened bread—picturing our taking on His sinless nature, a bite at a time.

Many church groups quote the following verse to make bread and wine a salvation issue: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:53-54). They combine this scripture with 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 and come up with a formula like this:

- 1) Eating his flesh and blood is required for salvation, and
- 2) Bread and wine represents his flesh and blood, so
- 3) Eating bread and wine is required for salvation.

But the conclusion of this formula is backwards. It is not a little bit of bread or wine that saves us, nor would literally eating Christ's flesh if it were available. The formula should work like this:

- 1) Eating bread and wine represents eating his flesh and blood.
- 2) Eating his flesh and blood represents putting in his nature and spirit and accepting his forgiveness for our sin (John 6:63, Matt 26:27-28).
- 3) Taking on His spirit, and accepting his forgiveness is what saves us, not the symbolic physical act.

Obviously, anyone interested in obeying the Eternal would be taking bread and wine at the times they understand the Bible to teach it—whether that be only on the Passover or more often. We **can find** condemnation for those who do not exam-

ine themselves, but **not** for repentant people who sincerely take it at the wrong time or in some wrong procedure (the scripture is not clear about whether we should use many little cups, share one cup, have someone break pieces of bread for us or each break our own piece).

Leavened or Unleavened?

How do we know when to use leavened bread and unleavened bread? Because the Greek *artos* usually refers to leavened bread, but can also mean unleavened bread, the New Testament tells us little for sure. We can be sure that **unleavened bread must be eaten during the seven Days of Unleavened Bread**—which includes the Passover meal. Most of the Old Testament offerings were with unleavened bread and Christ's sinless life is certainly best represented by unleavened bread. However, Christ's "body" is now the church (Col 1:18) which is still in the process of getting rid of sin:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [fellowship] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [fellowship] of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread (1Cor 10:16-17).

We prefer not to use the term "communion" because it reminds people of Catholic or Protestant sacraments. "Fellowship" is an equivalent term used here in Young's Literal Translation that does not sound like a sacrament. Leavened bread well symbolizes what we are now: one body, but imperfect. It reminds us that we cannot expect others in the body to be perfect.

Unleavened bread symbolizes what we are becoming—taking on the nature of Christ until we are perfect like He is now. Outside of the Days of Unleavened bread, there may be a place for taking each type of bread. We will study this topic more in the future.

Who Can Take Bread & Wine?

The question has been raised: if we have bread and wine on a regular basis, how do we make sure that unconverted people do not partake of it? **There is no Scripture that tells us we must prevent unconverted people from taking bread and wine with us.** The apostles had not yet received the holy spirit when they took it at the last supper. Furthermore, we do not really know who is converted. If you have observed the Passover for many years, you know of many people who

once observed it with you, but have since completely departed from Biblical living. Methods aimed at keeping out the unconverted do not work. That is why Paul says "let a man examine himself."

The most frequent reasoning used to keep "the unconverted" from taking bread and wine is the command to Israel to let only the circumcised eat the Passover. If there were a question, it was a fairly simple procedure to check. But now that circumcision is of the heart, it is inside where we cannot see.

We must not think of bread and wine as a "sacrament" like many of the large institutional religions do. It is not a "spiritual blessing" that we receive for being a member of a certain organization or for having been baptized. The holy spirit is the "spiritual benefit" that comes directly from the Father to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32)—it does not come through bread and wine. Forgiveness of sins does not come through bread and wine either, but to those who repent.

On the other hand, taking bread and wine is not a blessing to the unconverted either—it makes no sense to invite people to a service in the hope that bread and wine will somehow bring them closer to the Eternal. People should come to services because they want to learn. If they are willing to examine themselves, then they should be able to take bread and wine—they are responsible for their actions. There is a tendency for some people to want to leave children out of important religious matters (Mark 10:13-14). However, children learn best from physical lessons—from actually doing something. We see no reason to forbid them from taking bread and wine if they will do it in a serious manner.

Conclusion

As we stated at the beginning of this article, we are not advocating that congregations begin taking bread and wine on a regular basis (unless they all agree on it). The purpose mentioned in 1Cor 10:16-17 was for unity. Until the practice is better understood among Sabbatharians, trying to implement it will probably cause more division than unity. Widespread study and conviction of the holy spirit will be required to implement such a practice, not just our writings. But for now, this understanding should help us meet together with our brethren who may desire to take bread and wine during the Spring Holy Days, but on a different day than we do.

—Norman S. Edwards



News from Local Congregations



Old Articles Desired

I am seeking copies of old Plain Truth, Good News, co-worker letters, etc. of the Radio Church of God, especially on the subject of starting Ambassador College and setting up the hierarchical government structure that ensued (mainly between 1944-1954). I will gladly reimburse those who tell me what they spent for copying and postage—please don't "break" me!

Richard A. Heath
6097 N US Hwy 1
Ft. Pierce, FL 34946-7403

Sabbath Campers Fellowship

Once again, we have made plans for the 1997 SCF campouts. We hope that many of you will feel free to participate! The casual and informal atmosphere of the campground is an excellent place to fellowship. John 13:35 "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another."

Jim Rector of *Cornerstone Publications*, and Norm Edwards of *Servants' News*, will speak at the first campout planned for the weekend beginning Friday, June 6 through Sunday, June 8, 1997.

The second campout is scheduled for Friday, August 1 through Sunday, August 3, 1997. Speakers will be Ray Wooten, Pastor of the United Church of God, Birmingham and Alan Ruth of *Barnabas Ministries*.

Both campouts will be held at the Gateway Park Campground, 4111 W. Hallett Rd. in Hillsdale, Michigan, only about 10 miles north of the Indiana/Ohio state lines. All campers should make their own reservations by calling the campground office at (517) 437-7005. Reservations do tend to fill up early in the summer, so make yours as soon as possible to ensure your participation. For detailed directions to the campground and for motel accommo-

dations nearby for those who only want daytime visits, please contact:

Al and Jeanne Raines
5415 Torrey Rd
Flint, Michigan 48507-3811
(810) 232-2288/232-5562 fax
E-mail: weeder@kode.net

South Texas Church of God

About 40 members have recently formed a new fellowship for those living in the San Antonio, Texas vicinity. Mainly exiting from the United Church of God, these members will continue to seek and find truth from the scriptures and other sources. For information on this congregation contact Terry Post at 210-655-5332, work: 210-779-2289, fax: 210-779-2396.

Friends of the Sabbath Conference in Milwaukee

Milwaukee, Wisconsin saw its first *Friends of the Sabbath* seminar on the weekend of March 14-16. In spite of being quickly put together and hosted, John Merritt and the Milwaukee FOS staff made it a success. This seminar focused on the Sabbath with a sub-theme of Messianic Judaism.

Most all of the presenters for the weekend gave brief introductions on Friday night. **Samuele Bacchiocchi** made two very interesting comments during his extended introduction.

He spoke well for tolerance and for building bridges among people. He summed that point up by saying, "We used to say, 'We have the truth.' We should be saying, 'We seek the truth.'"

In light of that comment he told us of how he was challenged to study into the trinity doctrine. He stated that he and others should not be afraid to look at it closely. He then mused over some rather pointed questions about the nature of the trinity doctrine and commented on how many of these concepts

are not really scriptural.

Sabbath afternoon started with **Phil Mills**, a Seventh-Day Adventist Minister from Wichita, Kansas. He spoke about gifts and our possible ignorance of them. In Exodus 31, people were given the gift of art in the building of the tabernacle. He asked if it were possible that some eager Israelites got together and discussed issues like, "If you don't have the gift of art, then you really don't have the spirit!"

Samson was given a gift. Was it the gift of art? No, it was the gift of strength. Were the Apostles given the gift of art or of strength? They needed the gift of tongues. In other words, our Father gives to his children certain gifts at certain times to accomplish his will.

Kim Johnson, an accomplished Messianic Jew from Milwaukee spoke about God revealing himself to man.

Lauri Nelson, another well-studied Messianic Jew, gave a cursory overview of the two parts of Jewish law—the written law and the oral law. The written law obviously comes from the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The oral law began around the time of Ezra. She showed that there were millions of Jews who were taken to Babylon, yet only tens of thousands returned to the land of Israel. It appeared that the rest were assimilated! From that perspective, Ezra and the scribes instructed the people. They diligently installed extra instruction to their teachings so that the people would never assimilate again—something which appears to have worked. Now the activities around the Sabbath, i.e., the Kiddush and the Havdalah, are all designed to set apart the Sabbath as very special. It is all about sanctification.

Carl Falzone, a United Church of God elder from the Beloit, Wisconsin/Rockford, Illinois area, spoke next. He discussed the opportunity that the

Sabbath provides to build a relationship with God.

Sam Bacchiocchi then gave his presentation explaining how he was the first non-Catholic graduate from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. As his warm manner is, with big smile and Italian accent, he retold a number of stories regarding his studies into how Sunday-keeping began well after the New Testament era.

Sidney Davis, a Seventh-Day Adventist, was the last speaker that evening. He showed that the law is really not divided into two divisions—one of moral law and the other of ceremonial law. This may be convenient, but not biblical. Augustine, Jerome, Luther and Calvin all used these ideas to argue against the Sabbath and the Holy Days. Colossians 2:14-17 was dealt with very specifically and it was shown that what was nailed to the cross was a certificate of indebtedness—not the law. He also pointed out that this conclusion is not consistent with official SDA views.

James Schmadl, a Messianic Rabbi from the Milwaukee area, spoke Sunday morning. He spoke of the culture that Yahweh primarily chose to work through, starting with the covenant he made with Abraham. When it came time to redeem man, he sent Yahshua into the Jewish world. Everything about early Christianity was Jewish. Yahshua did a very Jewish thing at his last supper when he performed the seder. Jews did this every Friday evening, on the holy days and at special occasions such as weddings and family get-togethers. The bread and the wine always pictured Messiah as often as they took it—and it still does. The new believers were not called Christians, they were Jewish believers believing in the Rabbi Yahshua. After all, salvation is of the Jews.

Dean Wheelock, publisher of *Hebrew Roots* from Lakewood, a small community in the northern forests of Wisconsin, spoke on the value of understanding New Testament Judaism, since our faith does have Jewish roots.

He discussed a number of small points showing that our depth of understanding can be greatly increased just by knowing more about Judaism. He

asked how could a cock crow three times if it were forbidden for there to be chickens in Jerusalem. He showed how Paul was a Torah-observant Jew. He also showed why John the Baptist sent his disciples asking Yeshua whether he was the Messiah when he supposedly already knew.

John Purvins, from Appleton, Wisconsin, gave a message similar in nature to Dean Wheelock's. He encouraged us to learn some Hebrew that we may understand the deeper things of the New Testament.

—Norman Arthur

Seeking Correspondence

Those interested in corresponding with an isolated member, and SN subscriber, may choose to write Bob Lim. He reads and writes English, and has read numerous Sabbath-keeper's publications. Write to:

Bob Lim
7, Lorong Pandangan
42000 Port Klang
Selangor D.E.
MALAYSIA
E-mail: boblim@sunwayk.edu.my

Ancient History on CD-ROM

For those who have computers and like to study, a wealth of information is available on one CD-ROM. It contains: The Ante-Nicene Fathers, The Nicene Fathers, and The Post Nicene Fathers, Life and Writings of Flavius Josephus, Fox's Book of Martyrs, Darby Translation, Young's Literal Bible Translation, and over 100 other books. You can do full text searching on all books at once or separately. Ask for The Sage Digital Library (\$60 post-paid). This and other Bible books and videos are available from:

Sabbath House Ministries
PO Box 623
Thorsby, AL 35171-0623
205-646-3290 (fax: 205-646-3425)

WCG and PCG Legal Maneuvers Continue Regarding *Mystery of the Ages*

The Philadelphia Church of God

continues to print and distribute Herbert Armstrong's last book, *Mystery of the Ages*. The Worldwide Church of God, copyright holder of the book, filed suit in a Los Angeles Federal court in an effort to get a preliminary injunction restraining the PCG from printing until the merits of the suit are tried. This is the usual practice in copyright infringement cases. However, the Los Angeles Judge agreed that the PCG had a reasonable chance of prevailing in the case and refused to grant a preliminary injunction to stop the printing.

The WCG attorneys then dropped the case in Los Angeles and refiled it in an Oklahoma City Federal court. There will be a few weeks delay until the assigned judge can hold a preliminary hearing, at which time he could grant an injunction restraining any further printing and distribution, or he also could refuse to grant an injunction until the case is tried.

The reason why this is not a clear open-and-shut copyright case is that the PCG is claiming that their religious freedom is being limited by being unable to reproduce "the Scriptures of their religion"—which is approximately the status that they give "Mystery of the Ages". If the WCG were to continue to sell *Mystery of the Ages* at a reasonable price, the PCG would have to buy it from them. If this case is tried and decided in the PCG's favor, other writings of Herbert Armstrong may essentially be put in the public domain. The fact that Armstrong was the "founder" of the religion was a major factor in the Los Angeles judges reasoning. It is unlikely that a court decision would affect the copyright status of literature authored for the WCG by other individuals or groups.

We at *Servant's News* are glad to see greater access to Herbert Armstrong's writings, but do not feel that they are the Gospel-preaching tools of choice. We do not believe they should have the status of "Scripture" and feel there is danger in idolizing deceased leaders. The Gospel must continue to be taken to the world by living people who can speak and write the truth as it needs to be heard **today!** If there is one thing we can learn, it is that the writings of righteous men

should not be held by corporate copyrights—one can never know when someone with a different approach will get control over a corporation and use that control to prevent publication of the writings. Public domain writings will always be available if someone wants to print them. We can be thankful that the original Bible manuscripts are not controlled by a copyright!

Ceasing Publications

Bert Otten is ceasing the publications, Truth & Error, Waarheid & Dwaling, and Postbox 612 due to various changing circumstances in his life. He requests that no one ask for new subscriptions and would like those who have received his mailings to realize that there will not be any more.

PO Box 612
2800 AP Gouda
The Netherlands

UCG Tired of Local Boards

The United Church of God was founded in April 1995 on the principles of strong local congregations served by a home office. In our Sept-Oct 1995, and again in our Dec 1995 issue, Servants' News warned that the governing documents being produced by the UCG essentially made it a top-down hierarchy, with a certain appearance of group participation. At that time the UCG hierarchy made little effort to assert the power vested in it. But now, the asserting of power comes.

The Kansas City UCG set up a board in good faith after hearing the following from Richard Pinelli in May 1995 immediately after the Indianapolis conference. This is part of his letter:

I'm using the term 'local board' because I think you will see that the ministry will go back to a ministry of the word and prayer. The ministry will go back to ministering the word and prayer. They're going to get out of "deaconing".... The point is that we're going to try to make sure that the decisions about hall rentals and set up of the hall, the Passover, and all the things that have to be done—the buying of equipment—we're going to

leave that in the hands of the men, and we're going to try to do more work in evangelizing. We're going to try to do more work in trying to take care of the needs of the sheep from the point of view of real pastoring instead of all the other things. And then the board is going to be involved in some particular way so that if there is a problem, that they in the head office [sic] will be involved."

In their April 5, 1997 Kansas City Board Meeting, the UCG Local Pastor, Larry Greider, told the board that if he cannot over-rule any decision made by the board, then he cannot Pastor the church. Shortly after, they received this letter from Richard Pinelli, representing UCG headquarters:

April 11, 1997

Dear Brethren in Kansas City,

I am writing this letter because this past week I heard from several people in regard to your board meeting last Saturday night. I want to make a few statements concerning the growth and development of the United Church of God, that has taken place since that meeting I had with many of you in early May of 1995—only four days after the Indianapolis conference. It occurred to me that perhaps there are some misperceptions about some of the comments that I made at that meeting. In addition, the fact is that my views and vision of how UCG would operate have been developed further over the past 18 months as the Constitution and Bylaws were ratified in Cincinnati.

It is helpful to note that the term "board" is never used in the documents coming out of Cincinnati. The idea of boards comes primarily from a presentation in Indianapolis, which I used in the first meeting with many of you immediately after being there. **While we are not opposed to boards, we must realize their purpose is to advise and not govern.** In the meeting in Kansas City and the sermon I gave on governance, the role of the minister, his responsibility and proper authority was never intended to have changed.

Let me quote from the constitution: "3.2.2.1 The Local Congregation: An assembly of members, wherever located, pastored by a minister recognized by the United Church of God, an

International Association (UCG), and governed by the UCG's published rules of association, shall constitute a local congregation of the United Church of God, an International Association. Each local congregation is GUIDED and SHEPHERDED by a pastor, ASSISTED by elders, deacons and deaconesses. A congregation MAY establish one or more local ADVISORY councils to ASSIST the ministry in SERVING the needs of the local congregation, the Church as a whole, and as they have the opportunity, their local community. The local congregation also works in conjunction with the Council of Elders and the home office to administer the established policies and procedures of the UCG."

A congregation of UCG is first of all one which is "pastored by a minister recognized by United Church of God, an International Association (UCG)." The pastor is appointed, and he is responsible for serving God's people and the well-being of the entire congregation. The article goes on to state that he is to shepherd and guide the congregation. He is assisted by elders and deacons. The next statement: "A congregation MAY establish one or more local advisory councils to ASSIST the ministry in SERVING the needs of the local congregation." The article goes further to declare that a congregation is to ADMINISTER the ESTABLISHED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE UCG. Our established policies and procedures place the pastor in a position of oversight of the local congregation.

There was NEVER any intention when UCG was formed, for a board or council to control a local congregation. The pastor is responsible, ASSISTED by the deacons and elders, and ASSISTED by advisory councils from the congregation.

The Constitution further defines the role of the ministry in relation to the congregation:

"3.2.2 Administration Within the Church: We acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord, the Apostle of our faith and the Head of the Church. We acknowledge that God, in order to fulfill His mission and purpose for His Church, has appointed some to carry the gospel to the world, some to pastor

local congregations, some to teach, some to help, and some to administer. To the end that all members may exercise the grace given to them by God as He has willed, the following administrations within the Church are hereby established.”

A Church pastor is appointed. It is a calling. The members do not elect the pastor, nor do they govern the pastor. He is responsible for the well-being of the congregation and not a board or council.

The Kansas City board, at that early time, was set up with elders, deacons and leaders of the Church to handle the physical matters of the Church. The definition was refined in Cincinnati as “advisory” councils. An advisory body gives helpful input to assist the pastor; however it does not govern.

I know that the past two years has been unsettling for some in the Kansas City area. While trust must be built, I do hope everyone is willing to abide by and honor our Constitution and Bylaws in this regard, since the meaning is clear and more importantly, it is consistent with the Bible in this regard.

I hope this helps clear up where we are in United Church of God, an International Association, and where we have come from, since that first meeting we held in May, 1995, when the Kansas City Church was begun. Together, we can serve each other, the Church of God, and work together as God’s people to share this great message of hope with a desperate world.

Your brother in Christ,

(There was no signature, this area was blank.)

Richard Pinelli

Mr. Grieder stated that there were only 9 boards left among the UCG congregations. When asked if their interpretation meant that local church governance in UCG is identical to WCG and Global, Mr. Grieder said, “Yes.”

It is interesting to note that all three of the above organizations will acknowledge that there are converted people in the other organizations. Yet, they all claim a hierarchy where God only works from the top down. Cannot they also see, that each member has individually chosen which of these

three organizations they will attend? And then we must ask, is God limited to three? The breakup of the WCG has taught brethren that the Eternal sometimes gives them choices. The only thing that will stop these organizations from their continued loss of members is for their leaders to acknowledge that they are but men, and they should be followed only as they teach from the Bible, as the Spirit works through them and as they do works worthy of following. Leaders have no “right” to the allegiance of any believer.

New Hymnal Available Soon

Last fall some friends and I decided to put together a hymnal for our brethren in the churches of God. Although the five people involved are all part of UCG, our goal from the start was to keep this project free from any incorporational boundaries. I set a goal of April 1st to have all the editorial work done, and amazingly enough, we made it! I have a rough draft ready, and now we are taking a little time to figure out how much interest there is in our hymnbook. We need to decide how many to print before we can finalize royalty negotiations with the Worldwide Church of God and a few individuals.

We think we have come up with an uplifting collection of hymns both old and new. I tried to preserve our musical heritage and still give it a contemporary feel. It is definitely oriented towards our people, with hymns about Christ returning, the millennium, and the Sabbath. Here is a breakdown of the contents:

Hymns by Dwight Armstrong (with their original lyrics):

Blest and Happy Is the Man
How Excellent Is Thy Name
I Will Praise Thee, O Eternal
Who Shall Dwell on Thy Holy Hill?
Thee Will I Love, O Lord
Blessed Is the Nation God Is For
Turn Thou From Evil
O God, We Have Heard
Mount Zion Stands Most Beautiful
In Thy Lovingkindness, Lord
Thou Shepherd That Dost Israel
Keep
Praise the Eternal With a Psalm

How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings
O Lord of Hosts, My King, My God
O Come and Let Us Worship Him
Holy Mighty Majesty
Bless the Lord Eternal, O My Soul
Praise Belongs to God
O Give Thanks and Praise the
Eternal
O How Love I Thy Law!
Unless the Lord Shall Build the
House
Praise God’s Name
His Mercy Never Fails
By the Waters of Babylon
Hallelujah! Praise God
Go Ye Therefore Into All the World
If I Have Not Charity
Not Many Wise Men Now Are
Called

Behold, the Day Will Come
Other songs which are also in the WCG hymnal:

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee
All Glory, Laud and Honor
Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty
The Lord’s My Shepherd (Crimond)
The Lord’s My Shepherd (Havergal)
Come, Ye Thankful People, Come
Salt of the Earth
Consider the Lillies
God Speaks to Us
All Hail the Power of Jesus Name
The Church’s One Foundation
We have a Story to Tell to the
Nations
All Things Work Together
One Faith, One Love
Battle Hymn of the Republic
God Is Our Refuge
Onward Christian Soldiers
O God Our Help in Ages Past
The New Jerusalem
It Won’t Be Long Now
How Good and How Pleasant
By This Shall All Men Know

Songs which are in the WCG hymnal but which appear in ours in a somewhat different form:

Immortal, Invisible (slightly different melody)
Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken (same words, different tune—same tune as Love Divine, All Loves Excelling in the WCG book)
O Worship the King (alternate tune)
America the Beautiful (lower key, different arrangement)
The Mountain of the Lord (The

verse has a new melody and reworked lyrics)

Old songs which are new to us:

All People That on Earth Do Dwell (Familiar words set to Thomas Tallis' famous canon—may be sung as a round)

The God of Abraham Praise (An old hymn, with a new third verse which makes it particularly appropriate for God's people)

Men and Children Everywhere (An old Jewish melody, 20th century lyrics about God's creation)

The Spacious Firmament (Adapted from Haydn's *Creation*)

Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens Adore Him (Words from Psalm 148)

On the Sabbath Day (Melody written in the 1800s by Mark Warshavsky, a Ukrainian Jewish folk song writer. Used in the soundtrack of *Schindler's List*. New words by Mark Graham.)

The People That in Darkness Sat (Isaiah 9)

In Christ There Is No East or West Were You There (African-American spiritual about the crucifixion)

In Joseph's Lovely Garden (Traditional Spanish melody, words about Christ's death and resurrection)

God, Who Made the Earth We Gather Together (Same melody as We Praise Thee O God, Our Redeemer)

And a few new songs:

Wake, My Heart (by Mark Graham—words from Psalm 108, various millennial scriptures)

Great God, Who Made the Universe (by Mark Graham, about God's creation and plan)

In Days of Old (by Mark Graham, about Christ's birth and ministry)

Listen (John 3:16, and other scriptures about God's plan, melody from South Africa)

Song in the Night (by Mark Graham, about the work yet to be done)

There Is Joy in My Heart (Mark Graham, about Christ's return)

From the Highest Heaven (melody from the Peruvian Andes, about

Christ's return)

God Is Calling Children (by Mark Graham, lyrics adapted from HWA's three mandates)

God Will See Us Through (by Mark Graham, my personal favorite, a hymn about God bringing us through the times between now and Christ's return)

The hymnal will contain 77 hymns in all—93 pages (including index) with a durable soft cover. The Title will be: *Songs for the Family of God*.

We do not know the cost yet. Jim Hopkins is printing it at near cost; the rest of us are donating all labor and hymns. Our only expenses are royalties and printing and shipping costs. I would guess it will cost around \$6 or \$7 per book, mostly because of royalties, since I thought it was important to use some Dwight Armstrong hymns. They are a part of our tradition that we all have in common.

If this is of interest to you, it would help us to know how many copies you think you would order. If you have questions, you can e-mail me or call. I am out working most of the time but by now my wife and maybe even my children know as much about the project as I do, and someone can answer your questions. If you call on Sabbath, the answering machine will be on, but just say you are calling about the hymnal and we will talk if we are home.

I know this hymnal will not please everyone but I think there are some real treasures here. I am very happy with the collection. I have received much encouraging e-mail so far—it's part of what kept me going! Thanks for your interest!

—Mark Graham
PO Box 770261

Lakewood, OH 44107-0019

Tel: 216-529-1380 (Eastern Time)

E-mail: magraham@baldwinw.edu

Trouble for Church Corporations

The March-April 1996 Servants' News contained an article on why we are not a tax exempt, non-profit organization. One of the chief reasons was that such organizations must promise

to comply with all IRS regulations—both past and future. It seems that a lot more regulations were just added. The following is a quote from "Pastor's Family" magazine, (Feb-Mar 1997, page 29) Colorado Springs, CO 80995, a publication from Focus on the Family.

Last year's "Intermediate Sanctions" legislation affects every church and religious organization in America. It is the most sweeping law of its kind in 25 years.

The new law covers anyone who can exercise substantial influence over a non-profit organization (a "disqualified person," as newly defined by the legislation). If the IRS determines the person has received "excess benefits," he or she will be hit with a 25 percent penalty tax.

This need not be an employee or a director. Family members of disqualified person are also covered. The key factor is the amount of control the person has over financial affairs of the organization.

If penalized, a minister must pay back the benefit to the organization and pay the penalty tax and interest on the tax. The church and individual board members may also be liable for withholding-tax penalties. The new law is retroactive and applies to any compensation paid on or after Sept. 14, 1995.

What kinds of compensation are being considered as possible excess benefits? Here is a partial list of what IRS officials say are "potential targets": convention trips paid by the church, particularly when spouses are included; church-paid tuition, use of a "company car"; unsupervised expense accounts; sports and theater tickets; below-market loans and leases; free accounting, estate planning or legal services; paid sabbaticals; and excess contributions to pension and deferred-compensation plans.

A former IRS official told me the new legislation may be an administrative nightmare for organizations. But that's the law.

This article was written by J. David Epstein, a tax attorney in Carmel, Indiana who specializes in financial matters concerning ministers and Christian organizations.

Letters & Responses

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

Biggest Problem Among God's People

LETTER: December 16, 1996

Thanks so much for the back issues. It will take some time to study these. Please put my name on your mailing list.

If you are ever in Kansas City over the weekend please call. You are welcome to attend services with us. Would love to visit. (Met you at the Conference of the Churches of God in Tulsa. Much appreciated your input.) May God bless your efforts.

By the way, one of the biggest problems among God's People (and so called ministers) today is too little blessing others and way too much cursing in the form of innuendo and out and out slander.

—John M. Akin, Kansas

RESPONSE: We agree with you. We believe this problem comes from thinking "we must be a member of the one right group with all of the right doctrines." There is a tendency to attack others who have even one different belief because they make us uncomfortable. If other "apparently good" people have beliefs that are very similar—except in a few areas—we cannot help but think that they are probably wrong. We would feel a lot better if we could convince the other person to "see things our way." When we cannot convince them, there is a tendency to be angry.

When people's doctrinal beliefs are based on their own understanding of the Bible, then they should be confident that in a day of judgement they will be able to explain why they believed what they did. If they did the best they could with the understanding they had—even if it was wrong—there will be little condemnation (Luke 12:48). When

people base their doctrinal belief on whatever their organization or favorite minister teachers, then it is much easier for them to panic if someone challenges their belief. In a day of judgement, they are counting on all of their doctrinal beliefs being right, so they hope they will not have to explain them. They will not be able to explain the scriptures from which they derived their belief—they will have to admit that they were simply following an organization or a man. They should know better. —NSE

Exhortation To Be Patient

LETTER: December 13, 1996

Dear Norm,

I appreciate that God uses various printed ministries to help us grow more in grace and knowledge. Yours, along with others, such as Prophecy Flash, helps us think and prove all things. The publications I support do agree that God's people are scattered, must be spiritually fed, are **not** the only "work" but a part of God's work. We can learn and glean spiritual nuggets, I feel, moreso from independent ministries. They are more open to the brethren's input. Although most of us do not agree on all issues presented in these publications and tape ministries, the fruits prove they are providing a service to us.

One thing to remember, brethren, about these independent ministries, is the lack of time to answer everyone's letters and phone calls, or they'd never get any work done. Some ministries hold full-time jobs in addition to the service they are providing. Also, some ministries may not automatically send out donation receipts unless you specifically ask them because of lack of time and help. I personally know of ministries where the husband, wife, and a close friend or two are handling the work load, in addition to their jobs. So I ask the brethren to be patient if we don't receive answers. It may not be because of lack of caring but lack of time. Let's be thankful we have much information to glean from, because one day there will be the famine of the word.

Respectfully, —Pat Moody, Wash.

RESPONSE: Thanks for the encouragement. Your assessment of the independent ministries is largely correct. Most have a lot to do and not many resources. Nevertheless, this seems to be the case for many of the teachers found in the Bible. Apparently, though, the Eternal provides for the work that He wants done.

The vast majority of the work of

Servants' News is done by a husband, wife, and a few close friends. Fortunately, enough people support *Servants' News* that the Edwards have not needed to seek other work, but they also serve as parents of their four boys ages 3 to 12. The two jobs leave almost no time for anything else. —NSE

Freedom to Think and Study

LETTER: November 21, 1996

Dear Mr. Edwards,

Thank you for sending me *Servants' News* and yes I would like to continue to get it. Enclosed are some tithes to help with this work for I agree with the openness that you're going about it with.

I used to be a member of WCG back in the 70's—left in 1980 and recently just a month ago left CGI. Last Sabbath, three of us gathered by a park with our Bibles and had a meeting right there. God blessed it, and we had a meeting like the 1Cor 14 format with each having opportunity to speak and share. We had exposure with this from our past because when we left Worldwide in 1980, we met by a believer's house and met this way for years, we learned a lot meeting this way, and it is Biblical.

Many groups want to get the big organization back, but God is allowing it to be torn down, I believe, to teach His people to stop idolizing the organization and to look to Jesus Christ. To get their foundation down in Jesus Christ and not an organization, so if the organization falls, you won't fall with it. I believe now is the quiet time to prepare, if we don't use this time wisely to build up our personal relationship with Jesus Christ in our prayer life (Luke 21) then we won't make it. And the bigger organizations are not teaching this as they should. It's like a protecting point by God allowing it to be scattered into many little groups. God's people need to break free from the institutional thinking that has kept them in chains—so they can use their minds the way God wants, and it's the creative use of the mind that is needed for growth. There's no growth without thinking. Each child of God should prove all matters out as God tells us to, then the thinkers can soar when they are freed from the bondage of false teachings that keep them bound to a rigid pattern of thought.

I've had to unlearn many things to think freely as I should under the direction of God's Spirit. God wants to give us wisdom freely—but our wisdom stands in the way (Prov 3:5-6). I've shared with many concerning all that's happening to "make no decision without much prayer." It proves to be good advice. We must have the humility

that we may be wrong and consult God about all matters.

If we will do it this way God promises to guide us. God is teaching me to keep my own wisdom out of it. I'm glad to have an outlet to write some of these things and thank you for taking the time to do the work you're doing. I pray God will continue to bless your efforts. Servants' News is a good name, for each must serve with the gifts and talents available to each. God has so many people out there, no one can keep track of it all—I'm reminded when Elisha thought he was the only one and God reminded him that there were thousands of others!

Your brother in Christ,
—Tommy Willis, Louisiana
16300 Chef Menteur Hwy
New Orleans, LA 70129

RESPONSE: Our family and hundreds of others have gone through an experience very similar to yours. We know that our Loving Father can work with groups, or teach the same lesson to many individuals. Home Sabbath meetings will also have their difficulties, but each person can learn to individually apply the scriptures to solve the problems, rather than just wait for somebody to take care of it. As you well said, there is no growth without thinking. —NSE

Sacred Names Studies

LETTER: December 15, 1996
Dear Mr. Edwards:

It was a very positive experience to visit "your" feast site for my friend and me. It was also a privilege for us to meet you. We are attending with United and are happy with the freedom we have to stay informed from different sources.

[Literature request deleted].

Just a few remarks relating to your Sacred Name study.

I'm not sure if we can prove when Hebrew began. Was that language even in existence before the tower of Babel? While the name "Hebrew" appears to come from a descendent of Abraham, Eber, wasn't the language adopted from the Canaanites? Why should we think that Hebrew is the language of heaven and the angels? (I Cor 13:1) The Bible doesn't say that Hebrew is a sacred language.

Why would God give many languages but then be upset with the sound of His name in those languages He gave mankind?

We know that YHVH was not pronounced for many years and therefore it would seem to follow that had Christ pronounced it, He would have had to run for

his life the way He had to for breaking some other Jewish traditions.

Acts 2:38 is really not that hard to comprehend for those whom God calls.

Finally, when Jesus used another name "Eli" instead of YHVH on His "death bed" in Matt 27:46, then that is a strong point of proof for me that a Sacred Name doctrine is not Biblical. Of course, there's Acts 4:12 and Rev 19:12. I know it is claimed that the entire NT Greek has been corrupted and edited concerning God's name.

Do we really think God's ego is more easily offended by His name being translated than humans are when our name is?

Ex 6:2-3 strongly suggests Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not know the name YHVH.

No offense is intended but just a desire for truth. Norm, keep up the fine work.

Sincerely, —M.H., Ohio

RESPONSE: Thanks for the letter. We will do the best we can with the many questions you have asked.

We cannot prove that Hebrew was "the original" language or that it is a divine language. It certainly has words in common with other Canaanite and other Mid-Eastern languages, but it is sometimes hard to prove which language got which words from which other language. The one thing we can say is that it is the language of the Old Testament. There is evidence that the original Hebrew characters were shaped differently, that some words were once pronounced differently, and that some meanings of some words have changed. However, I know of no research that concludes that the Hebrew scriptures are a translation from some other yet-older language.

There is no end of debate on what is the proper way to render someone's name in another language. There is a Hebrew name *Yo-sef*. Our English equivalent is "Joseph." But if we want to, we are capable of writing and saying "Yosef"—and we might well do that if we wanted to gain the respect of a Hebrew Person with that name. Those who believe in Sacred Names recognize that we do not need to write the names in Hebrew letters, but they would like us to write English letters that sound the same as the Hebrew Name. —NSE

Liked Oklahoma Feast

LETTER: October 23, 1996
I came to the Grove, Oklahoma area to keep the Feast with The Churches of God but I was also wanting to visit the *Servants' News* Feast. I ended up not attending the

Churches of God services, even though I really missed my friends there, because I learned so much at the *Servants' News* Feast Services.

I was very inspired by the sermons (well, most of them, as some had ideas that were not what I believe the Bible teaches). But there were men there who obviously study diligently and had much knowledge. I loved the openness and the tolerance, the opportunity that was given for all the congregation to participate or question. I agree with you that maybe some topics would be better presented in a seminar but I still enjoyed every minute I spent at the Feast. In fact, I, for the first time, hated to have to leave and go home! (Even though for the 33 years I've been in the church, none of my family believes as I do and does not attend with me. Usually I get a little "homesick" for them by the Last Day).

I loved the music! It was so uplifting and wonderful. As soon as I could I went to a Bible Book Store and bought a tape called "Messianic Praise". It has a couple of songs that we sang there. It was the first time I felt such a deep joy in worshipping God in song.

The whole experience moved me deeply. Thanks to all who contributed to the Feast. I hope you had sufficient funds to meet the expenses there. (Enclosed is a small offering).

[Literature request omitted].

It was great to see your family participate in the music. Thank Mr. and Mrs. Dewey for their part in making the Feast so successful. Thank you for *Servants' News* each month.

—B C, Kansas

RESPONSE: A lot of good, Bible-based music is available from religious mail-order houses and Christian book stores. As an example, Maranatha Music produces the "Messianic Praise" and "I AM" cassette albums. The music is worshipful and inspiring and the lyrics are mainly taken from scripture. The word "messianic" is from Messiah and rightly praises our Saviour. Local Christian bookstores may carry these. An individual recently told me, after spending years in WCG, the music she now chooses is of the messianic praise type because "it is the only music that inspires me to want to praise and worship my Creator". —Marleen Edwards

Questions on Tithing

LETTER: October 18, 1996
Dear Mr. Edwards:
I would like to ask if you could shed any light on some research I am doing on the

subject of tithing. I have done a small amount of research on the subject, but I was not able to find a whole lot about the subject. I am basically interested in the administration of tithes, that is, how was the system of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd tithes set up. The commentaries I have read seem to vary from the system that I have become used to in WCG and now in UCG.

All the commentaries agree that the 1st tithe was holy and was to be separated from the increase before anything else was used. That seems to be the only similarity to the system I was taught and the commentaries. Everything I have read in Jewish reference books says that the second tithe was 10% of the remaining increase after the first tithe was separated.

They further agree that the 2nd was only set aside on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, & 5th years of a 7 year cycle. The 3rd tithe, used for the widows and poor, replaced the 2nd tithe in the 3rd and 6th year. As I said, all the material I've seen supports this tradition. I haven't seen anything to support the system that Mr. Armstrong said that the Bible taught. How did he arrive at his interpretation? Can you tell me where I can find out more about this subject?

Thanks, —NH, West Virginia

RESPONSE: The Worldwide Church of God and its look-alikes taught a view of second and third tithe that was held by very few—though they often presented it to their members like it was what nearly all scholars believed, but nobody had the “faith” to do it. The views you expressed are the most commonly held. Josephus mentions three tithes (Antiquities, bk 4,3,4; bk 4,8, bk 4,22), as does the apocryphal book *Tobit*. These statements reflect what some groups were doing at certain times, they are not an accurate reflection on what was done through most of history. The biggest book promoting three tithes is *The Tithe in Scripture* by Henry Lansdell. Also see the Nov-Dec 1994 *Global Church News*. —NSE

How Do We Give to the Eternal?

LETTER: April 2, 1997
Norm,

I hope this finds you and your family doing well.

I was very impressed and inspired by your recent article “How Do We Give to the Eternal?” I have been studying this issue for a while now and was pleased at how you brought all the information together. Are you planning to publish it in the *Servant's News*? I hope so. There is still a lot of healing & correction that needs to take place in the church.

God bless you and keep up the good work.

Sincerely, —D.W., Texas

RESPONSE: *How Do We Give to the Eternal?* is a little big to publish in *Servants' News*, but we will continue to offer it separately to whoever requests it. It is possible we could run it in installments at some time in the future. Thanks for the encouragement.

—NSE

Tithe Instead of Land

LETTER: February 6, 1997
Hi Folks,

Regarding tithing, Numbers 18:20-21 says to me that the Levites were given the tithe instead of the land the Israelites were promised. This way God kept His word—as the only reason for having land is for what it will produce! And God gave them the produce. The only people that **can** tithe are those farming the promised land.

Well, take care and keep up the good God-biased efforts.

—Doug Beatty, de Bolt, Alberta Canada

RESPONSE: We largely agree with you. The Levites were given **less land** (not no land) and so they were to be compensated for the other services they provided. You are quite right in observing that tithes were always on produce. Some will say that Israel simply did not have a money economy, but we find 625 verses that contain one or more of these words: “shekel(s)”, “money”, “gold” or, “silver”. —NSE

Still Studying Tithing

LETTER: January 28, 1996
Norman,

Certainly the xCGs [various “Church of God” groups] had tithing abusively wrong! On that we agree!

While I haven't read the new tithing paper yet, I jumped to the last few pages and noticed especially the bold print that says tithing is not part of the new covenant.

Since I believe all the necessary merciful exceptions were already built into tithing as it existed in the old covenant, I only see the administration of tithing as being changed (Heb.7). Unclean meats and Holy Day observance weren't spelled out again in the New Testament either, but I believe in them as well.

There is a mention of wages in Haggai 1 that correlates indirectly to the fruits of their labor including agricultural. When I read that certain ones tithe on everything, I don't think it was limited to just agricultural produce, even though those in that agrari-

an society primarily produced food stuffs. Also, the Septuagint does use three different descriptions for first, second, and third tithe. Anyway, our works don't save us, but they do point the way.

RESPONSE: Thanks for the letter. I realize that it will take some time to work through the tithing issue and that we all have more to learn. There are so many things that many of us simply have not thought of before. I think it is also amazing how much picking and choosing goes on. If Josephus states there are three separate tithes, many people are ready to accept that in spite of a vast amount of Jewish teaching to the contrary. On the other hand, if Josephus says tithing was on agricultural products, many people ignore that.

The New Testament has examples of Peter observing the clean meats laws (Acts 10:14), and the holy days (Acts 18:21, 1Cor 5:8). The purposes of these laws are still very much alive. However, the New Testament examples of tithing are only to Levites and we do not believe that Hebrews 7 is talking about a change in tithing at all. Beside, there are numerous examples of giving in the New Testament where tithing is never mentioned.

Haggai 1:6 talks about wages being cursed, but there are numerous scriptures in the Bible that talk about physical cursing for disobedience (Deut 11:26-28; also chapters 27 through 30, Jer 29, etc.) without mention of tithing.

We must remember that the Septuagint is a translation from the Hebrew, so when it has three separate expressions where the Hebrew has one, it represents the opinions of the translators, not what the Hebrew scriptures say.

LETTER: I think your most reasonable point, that Paul's not claiming their tithe support in Corinth would have been encouraging or teaching them to sin, is addressed indirectly in Juan's paper. **[For a paper with a different view of tithing, contact Juan Rains, PO Box 1082, Andrews, NC 28901.]** Consider (assume) that we have a responsibility to tithe on **increase** unless we are suffering hardship that would qualify us for assistance from others, but that **where or who we tithe to is NOT specified in the Royal Priesthood**. Therefore Paul didn't have authority to claim **tithe control** (nor does anyone else), but rather had to demonstrate his worthiness of their support. I think most of the Jews still tithed to the Temple system for a long time after Christ died, and that is partly why Paul wrote Heb.7 even using tithing as an example of a change in the administration due to the change in the

priesthood—back to the order of Melchizedec to whom Abraham tithed.

RESPONSE: I agree that Jews tithed to the Levites as long as the temple stood, but to where did the gentile converts tithe? There seems to be no teaching on this. Also, the Jews only tithe on produce grown in the land of Israel. Do you believe that Paul began to teach Jewish converts outside of Israel to tithe—if so, to where?

LETTER: However, I have never read anything in the New Testament that would have unbound or annulled the well established tithing principles from of old (even 3 tithes, although welfare taxes more than fulfill third tithe today). I also see end-time prophecies against those who eat swine and abominable things, and those that forsake tithing. Therefore I conclude that the righteous will abide by the guiding principles of the Lord who changes not. On the other hand, the ritual and sacrificial laws were fulfilled in Christ and clearly not required anymore as explained in the New Testament.

RESPONSE: I do not believe that tithing was un-bound in the New Testament, it was a means of supplementing the Levites income because they had no inheritance. I believe that it was not transferred to the church—either while the temple existed or afterward—and this is born out by numerous examples of giving and no examples of tithing for church purposes.

LETTER: Now, nothing we DO makes us righteous of and by itself, but what we do is a reflection of our hearts and our faith. (For example, simply not working on the 24 hour Sabbath is nothing if we don't keep the day holy.) Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

RESPONSE: I agree with this.

LETTER: We see the highlights in Abraham's life and some sketchy examples of his tithing, but we must be careful not to draw totally vast conclusions on half vast data! If the tithing principle wasn't pre-ordained before the Levitical system, then why are there so many examples of righteous Patriarchs paying a tenth?

RESPONSE: So many examples? The only real example we have is Abraham paying a tenth of spoil that was not increase to him as he did not keep it. We see Jacob promising to give a tenth of what was given him, but we have no specific example of what he tithed or to whom. Yet we have many examples of clear non-tithing by Patriarchs. Jacob did not tithe on his wives, Joseph did not have the Israelites or Egyptians tithe on their abundant harvest. Their was no tithe on manna outside the land of Israel. Only a fiftieth of the spoil of

a war was given to the Levites (Num 31). The tabernacle was built with offerings, not a tithe of the Egyptian spoil.

LETTER: I don't believe all these and the rest of the righteous examples of tithing can be explained away as not applicable today in principle due to this or that specific historic practice that doesn't apply in society today. What went on in the heart? That still is relevant!

—Oregon

RESPONSE: I agree completely. I am not against giving large percentages of one's personal wealth to do the Eternal's work. I sold two houses to start *Servants' News*. If a person has been tithing for years, I see nothing wrong with him or her committing to the Eternal to continue such giving. What I cannot find is a single Bible verse anywhere that leads me to believe tithing is an eternal principle for all mankind. The eternal principle is "it is better to give than to receive." Tithing appears to be a part of the physical system that the Eternal gave ancient Israel. We can learn much from the principles—we can see today that many good religious works do not succeed due to lack of funds. However, we do not send a tithe of our food products to a temple storehouse today in the way the Eternal commanded them in the book of Malachi.

—NSE

Is the Old Testament All Fulfilled?

LETTER: August 20, 1996
Dear Churches,

The Old Testament points to Jesus Christ. The New Testament reminds us of the O.T. fulfilled, which is frequently repeated in the N.T., to indicate that Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Christ. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt.5:17). The dictionary meaning fulfill is, to carry to completion, complete, accomplish, or carry into effect. Christ is the end (goal) of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (Rom 10:4). The laws of God are given to the Israelites, the law of Jesus Christ was given for us today. Christ has given us freedom from the laws of God (Gal. 5:1-25). The law of Christ is summed up in a single command; Love your neighbor as yourself.

RESPONSE: Yes, Christ was able to fulfill the law; he was able to live it perfectly. Also read the first part of that verse, it says that he did not come to destroy it—it is still here. Your reference in Galatians is also very good. "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law" (v 18). Indeed it is the power of the Spirit that enables us to

do what is right, not meticulous attention to the letter of the law. But what will those who are really led by the spirit do? First, they will not do all of the "works of the flesh" listed in verses 19 through 21—you can find every one of those sins listed in the Old Testament law. What will happen if we think we are walking in the spirit but continue to do those things that are against the law? "...those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (v 21). A punishment for sin—that sounds like some kind of law is still in effect.

But does Christ give us his spirit just so we can keep a specific list of rules? Oh, no! He did much more than that. The fruits of the spirit listed in verses 22 to 23 gives us the power to keep the law and to go beyond the law to keep the full spiritual intent.

LETTER: Many are misreading the O.T, these scriptures were given to us for an example and for our admonition (1 Cor 10:11). The O.T. was written to show us how God dealt with the children of Israel. God was very specific about who He was talking to. In most instances, He would say, "speak unto the children of Israel," this was to avoid any confusion. But somehow there is still confusion. Christians, today, still want to believe that the O.T. was meant for us today.

RESPONSE: Unfortunately, reasoning like this adds to the confusion. The fact that the Old Testament examples are for our learning does not render void the commands of the Eternal in the Old Testament. The expressions "speak unto the children of Israel" are found frequently in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, but **not once in any other book**. That expression is always used between the Eternal and Moses. The Eternal used it when he had words to be repeated directly to the people. In other places the Eternal told Moses to speak to Aaron and his sons (Lev 6:5). In other places He spoke just to Moses (Ex 14:29). When the Eternal spoke the commandments, he addressed them to everyone listening and he **spoke loudly** (Ex 20:1,18,19).

If you have any doubts about the value of the Old Testament, remember that Paul told Timothy "and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (1Tim 3:15-16). The only scriptures that were available to Timothy "from childhood" were the Old Testament.

LETTER: The Israelites were God's cho-

sen people. HE set aside the Sabbath as a special covenant with Israel. *"Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generation; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you"* (Ex 31:13 also 16-17). There are two key words that let us know who the Lord is talking to. (1) A generation is a body of people existing at the same time or period. (2) God is specific, it is a sign between He and the children of Israel.

The Sabbath is a covenant between God and the children of Israel ONLY. The Feasts are also part of this covenant. Leviticus 23, is also specific about who was supposed to keep these Fof the Lord. Verse 2,10,24,34, says, *"Speak unto the children of Israel."* Verse 42 leaves no room for error, *"Ye shall dwell in booths seven days all that are ISRAELITES BORN shall dwell in booths."* Who are Israelites? *"Their's is the adoption as sons; their's the divine glory, the COVENANTS, the receiving of the LAW, the worship and the promise"* (Rom 9:4 NIV). The key to understanding the Bible is understanding who God is talking to and why.

The Old Testament or Covenant, Exodus to Deuteronomy, contain over 600 laws given to the children of Israel. A covenant like a contract is binding upon the people that agree to keep it. Exodus 24:7, *"He took the book of the covenant, and read it in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient"* (see verse 3). Also let's look at Deuteronomy 5:2-3, *"The Lord our God made a covenant with US in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with US, even US, who are ALL OF US HERE ALIVE THIS DAY."*

God found fault with the first covenant, He established a new covenant (Heb 8:6-13). The new covenant is not a revolutionary new idea, as it was planned. *"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel"* (Jer 31:31).

RESPONSE: It is interesting to note in Jeremiah that the New covenant is also to be made with the "house of Israel." Does that mean it does not apply to non-Israelites? No, non-Israelites were always invited to join the Israelites if they were to live like them (Ex 12:49). Others are also welcome to join the new covenant as they become part of Israel (John 4:22; Rom 2:28-29; 11:13-28).

But how does the new covenant work? We need to read two more verses down in Jeremiah: *"But this is the covenant that I*

will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer 31:33). The new covenant is founded on God's law!

LETTER: The Israelites were not able to keep the law, the law became a curse instead of a benefit. ALL WHO RELY ON OBSERVING THE LAW ARE UNDER THE CURSE, FOR IT IS WRITTEN; Deuteronomy 27:26, *"Curse be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them"*. Gal.4:10, *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: For it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."* The law in the covenant produce a curse, from which Christ had to redeem men. Keeping the Sabbaths, Feast days, food laws, and tithing are some of the laws, but the Bible clearly states that you are cursed if you do not do all things which are written in the book of the law. Remember there were over 600 laws. See the consequences of disobedience, Deut. 28:15-68.

RESPONSE: Obviously, we are not under the old covenant. We no longer have a temple, we no longer have our own land, we know longer have the judicial system prescribed in the Bible. The Eternal divorced Israel and punished Judah. Many of the 600 commands simply cannot be obeyed now—even most Orthodox Jews would agree. Some of the Old Testament laws were not good, but were given to compensate for the evil in man (Ezk 20:24-25). But many of the Old Testament laws are applicable today and they show us how to love our neighbor. The ones we cannot keep, we can study to understand the mind of the Eternal. One of the tasks of believers today is to study the Bible and learn how much they can do, not how little.

LETTER: Paul warned us that there would be false apostles that would masquerade as apostles of Christ. (2Cor. 11:13). HERBERT ARMSTRONG WAS A FALSE APOSTLE. Every doctrine he taught was wrong. He gave meaning to the holy days that are not biblically sound or found. Israel is an agricultural country, the holy days represented the end of a harvest season. Herbert Armstrong fabricated meaning for these days, that cannot be found in the Bible or any history book.

It is ludicrous to believe that the Feast of Tabernacles is God's plan of salvation. Many souls will be lost because of this wrong teaching. The Bible states that salvation comes by none other than Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). He is the Author of eter-

nal salvation (Heb. 5:9) This salvation, which is a free gift from God, has nothing to do with the holy days. The Feast of Trumpets is not when the dead in Christ will rise, it is Israel's New Year celebration (Psa. 81:3). On the last Passover Christ celebrated, he instituted a new covenant or testament. *"This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you"* (Luke 22:20). Christ became our Passover (1 Cor 5:7) The Passover was replaced by what is called the Lord's Supper or Communion (1Cor 10:16). We have received our atonement to God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:11).

RESPONSE: Herbert Armstrong taught salvation by repentance, baptism, and faith in Jesus Christ, not by the keeping of the holy days. While some of his holy day teachings are not found in the scriptures, others are. We find, from both the Bible and early church history, that the holy days were continually kept by early believers. We find no "replacement" of any holy day in the New Testament.

Paul warned believers not to be concerned with the rituals of the Jewish calendar (Gal. 4:8-11 and Col. 2:16). These holy days were the shadow of things to come, but the real substance is Christ. Justification is not by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16). To try to worship days to please God is legalistic.

RESPONSE: Galatians 4:8-11 is clearly talking about Gentiles returning to their former ungodly religious practices. Col 2:16 is a warning not to let others judge us as to how we keep holydays, but not a command to ignore them. "Yes", these days are a shadow, and "no" we do not **earn** salvation by keeping these days, but they teach us lessons that many of us desperately need to understand. They are also a primary means of teaching our yet-unconverted children.

LETTER: DEAREST FRIENDS, DO NOT FRUSTRATE THE GRACE OF GOD: FOR IF RIGHTEOUSNESS CAME BY THE LAW, THEN CHRIST IS DEAD IN VAIN (Gal.2:21). To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it (Eph. 4:7). *"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the Gift of God"* (Eph.2:28 NIV).

Ignorance is a valid excuse only if knowledge is not available. The Bible is available to all to read and research.

Sincerely, —A.L. Rollins, Illinois

RESPONSE: We agree! Remember our Savior's admonition to live by "every word of God" (Matt 4:4, Luke 4:4). Where did He get that idea? Deuteronomy 8:3! We are

confident that you will grow to see the value of the Old Testament if you continue to study your Bible with an open mind and seek the will of the Eternal. —NSE

Where Is the Love?

LETTER: January 17, 1997
Dear Mr. Edwards:

Your paper has really been helping me, like so many others, **in our process of tremendous change, trials, and still plain confusion** since WCG has turned Protestant and against God's way.

Yes, I'm still in confusion with so much going on, and so, so many now believing and teaching so many different things, dates, and all the bickering that's being said and printed. To me, **it's very sad to see so many not even being friends anymore.** I never, ever dreamed I'd see such a thing.

I've been in WCG since 1972 and quit in 1995. Why so long to wait? Well, I'm disabled and couldn't attend. Only rarely did I get tapes and less did I get fellowship, so, I was in the dark. Then to hear most of the people stayed (at that time) with WCG and I didn't, I was really alone—til I heard of your paper. It has really helped me study and been so worthwhile.

I can't help but wonder **"where is the love and concern by brethren today that God our Father and Christ wants us to have and give?"** Alone I am and miles away but much farther from those who really care—and they are **"very rare"** so I cherish those few deeply and pray for all of us, knowing for all things God has HIS reasons. In the end, if we live His way and hold tight, our reward will be great! HE is always with us even when we are physically alone. Thanks again and please accept this donation for materials requested.

—Mrs. Ruthann Monroe
20250 Quail Run Dr.
Cordes Lakes, AZ 86333

RESPONSE: "Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt 24:12). It should not be this way with God's people. Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

[Personal response sent, also]

—Marleen Edwards

Footwashing & Hierarchy Don't Mix

LETTER: March 29, 1997
Dear brethren,

I do not believe that many of us have ever understood what footwashing was instituted for.

In time sequence, the disciples had

been arguing at the start of the last supper as to who was the greatest (the Muhammad Ali syndrome). Luke 22:24 records "And there was also a strive among them which of them should be accounted the greatest..." It was soon after this that Christ "riseth from supper and laid aside his garments: and took a towel and girded himself..."

To leave us in no doubt about what Christ did this for, he explains it—yet we still do not get what He plainly said. John 13:13 "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

Footwashing has everything to do with Church Government. Christ was showing that HE was the Master, the one and only master, and that all their arguing about who was the greatest was totally irrelevant and carnal. He then showed them what true greatness is—not having a rank, but serving. Serving is not popular. Humble service is despised. Christ was despised. How would you react to God appearing to you and saying He wished to wash your feet? Now that is an attitude that separates the true God from all the false, and the true servants from the false.

A footwashing attitude is one of wanting TO minister, rather than wanting to BE the minister. We are all ministers. Angels minister. Christ ministers. I recognize no rank called minister. I call every member by their Christian name, not mister, and the title they and others confer on them—it all means nothing to me. When we shine with different glories, then we will know who was who in the zoo. God has called every man, woman and child to minister. Before Philadelphians there is an open door, with no man/hierarchy standing blocking the way, saying we may or may not minister. The fields are white out there and ripe to harvest, and harvesting began immediately after Passover. We can go minister to them. Anyone who has been in the church longer than 3.5 years has had more "ministerial training" than Christ's Apostles had. We can go and serve in any and every capacity, no man forbidding us. This is the gist of the very last verse of Acts. Unless we get rid of the attitude of looking to men for permission or approval, we will never see action in preaching the Gospel. "Preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no one forbidding him".

Footwashing did away with hierarchy.

Footwashing celebrates the removal of worrying who is the greatest. Christ is. We are all servants. —Steven Thomas

e-mail:whysvt@iilink.nis.za

RESPONSE: This was an excellent explanation. We believe that footwashing as a ritual teaches an important lesson. However, if people think they are fulfilling the scripture by washing someone's feet once each year, they are missing the whole point. The real issue is that everyone, including those in authority, ought not to think they are above doing "menial work" when it needs to be done. —NSE

Appreciates Passover Article

LETTER: March 17, 1997
Hello Norm,

I just completed the Passover article from the newest "Servants' News" last evening, and wanted to take the opportunity to thank you for the scholarly quality of your work. Seldom have I seen a topic covered in such a way that will allow everyone to get the facts, yet leave them free and unjudged to choose the best path that they believe God has placed before them.

A friend of mine who read the article before me, commented on the fact that while "grace" was never mentioned per say, the whole article had the flavor of God's grace throughout. I think it is important to realize as we find ourselves in increasingly difficult times as a church, to remember that attribute of Christ's nature and take it upon ourselves to have that type of mercy for our scattered brethren, wherever they may be.

It is the same attitude that Christ has for us, even at this very moment. We all think we have God-given understanding, but the plain simple truth is that The Father and Jesus Christ have full and perfect understanding. They understand how little we know and how wrong we are in our understandings. Yet they love us in spite of our shortcomings, misunderstandings, and foibles.

Perhaps if we were able to love as our Father and Elder Brother do, we wouldn't have the splinterings we see today.

Please keep up the good work.

Warmest regards and love,

—John Davis, Warsaw, Indiana

RESPONSE: Thank you for the encouragement. Nearly everyone I have met wants to observe this day the way the Eternal wants it observed. But the arguments deal with so many meanings of Hebrew and Greek words, apparent Bible contradictions, questionable history, estimates of how long it takes to move two million peo-

ple, and other subjects that are very time consuming and difficult for people to understand. Literally thousands of pages have been written on the subject. How can we expect all of the Eternal's people to believe the same thing? —NSE

Bread & Wine in Jewish Practice

LETTER: March 14, 1997

The "kiddush", a practice of eating bread (*challah* [Hebrew]) and drinking wine (*hagafem boray fe-ree* [Hebrew]) is regularly practiced in Jewish families, not only every Shabbos [Sabbath], but at not all gatherings of the Jewish people. I, for one, can recall seeing it at weddings, funerals(!), bar-mitzvahs, even just get-togethers.

It appears to be even more significant to us—spiritual Jews—as it is the symbol given us by our Savior of partaking in Him. "For as often as ye do this..."

—Brother David, Pennsylvania Jew, spiritually and physically

RESPONSE: It is interesting to hear other's experience in this area. I do not advocate the keeping of Jewish tradition because it seems nice, but when it is apparently also taught by the scriptures, then I think we need to carefully consider it. We hope to write an article someday on the Jewish traditions that were upheld in the New Testament, and the ones that were condemned.

—NSE

Appreciated Calendar Conference

LETTER: February 5, 1997

Dear Norman,

We consider it a great benefit to have been able to attend the Calendar Conference in Dallas. A lot of information was provided, and I feel every presenter believed their concept was the right one. The conference allowed us to consider every aspect from astrology to the Hale-Bopp Comet. The panel discussions gave everyone an opportunity to question the presenters that made themselves available.

After fully considering everything, we were unable to agree with any concept presented, nor are we satisfied with continuing with the Hebrew Calendar that the Churches of God have been following for years. We believe the Eternal to be a creator of perfection, therefore an arbitrary sliver or first crescent would not be a new moon.

We contacted the Burke-Baker Planetarium for the new moons (conjunc-

tions) of 1997. This makes April 8th the beginning of the Sacred Year. Per Leviticus 23: Passover is April 20th, unleavened Bread April 21-27th, Pentecost June 15th, and with the new moon of the 7th month being October 1st, that is Trumpets. Continuing with Leviticus 23: October 10th is the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles beginning on October 15th with the 22nd being what most call the Last Great Day.

No artificial postponements of any kind were considered, and we also believe the beginning of the Sacred Year should always follow the Spring Equinox. We feel the Eternal would have revealed them if they were necessary. We do not consider keeping God's Holy Days a Burden regardless of how they fall. We feel this is right, so we are following our heart, and hope we will not be alone. We would like feed-back from anyone that is interested.

Sincerely,

—Bob & Margaret Rose
TOROSH@swbell.net

RESPONSE: We appreciate your desire to follow what you believe is the correct calendar. However, since you use astronomical conjunctions to begin your months, you can be pretty sure that the calendar you are keeping is not the one that the Patriarch's of the Bible kept. See the article on "Earthshine" in this issue for an explanation.

We have heard many calendar explanations begin by saying "since God is a God of perfection, He must have..." Then the person goes on to describe what they believe the Creator would do. I see two main problems with this:

1) People's ideas of perfection and the Eternal's ideas seem to be different. Many people's idea of perfection would include perfectly round orbits of the Moon and Earth, and months and years that were an exact number of days—but that is not what the Eternal did. To other people, perfection means something simple enough that they can easily understand it. But Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, said people could not figure out everything that the Eternal has done: "then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it."

2) The Eternal did not say that the creation was "perfect," but he said that it was "very good" (Gen 1:31). If he did not leave instructions the heavenly bodies in such a way for us to know his simple calendar,

then it is possible that He intended it to be centrally administered.

The calendar you have chosen will sometimes synchronize for an entire year with other calendar systems currently in use—and will usually be within a day or two of the heavily used Hebrew Calendar. We hope things will work out so you will be able to fellowship with other brethren on the Holy Days.

—NSE

Calendar Comments

LETTER: March 13, 1997

Dear Mr. Edwards:

I was most pleasantly surprised to see your report on the Dallas conference on Biblical calendars. The content of the topics presented confirmed that there is a lot of dissatisfaction and/or uneasiness with the present practice of following the Hebrew calendar in regards to the establishment of the dates of the annual Holy Days. I was unaware of this conference when I sent your copies of the various papers on this same topic for your review last February 23rd, but your report was the intended purpose of my transmittal, and the presentations you reported showed the level of interest in other areas of the country among God's people. It seems to me that this widespread (universal) and simultaneous concern for "getting it right" may very well be the working of the Holy Spirit. Surely Satan is not interested in correcting erroneous practice.

RESPONSE: Debates over calendars have existed in the smaller Sabbath-keeping congregations for at least 20 years. People in big organizations usually trust their "scholars" to know the answers to these questions. The scholars usually publish an article quoting only one view (usually the Jewish calendar), and that is the end of the matter for most people.

Satan would be interested in correcting erroneous practice if he could cause a lot of division in the process. If thousands of people leave one error for the truth, and tens of thousands of people leave one error for a bunch of different errors, and none of them work together any more—Satan will be happy.

LETTER: You raised the question of "keeping the Holy Days early" if Russell's system (J. Russell, Corona, CA) is followed, i.e., keeping the Holy Days based on the true astronomical conjunction. While I'm not trying to speak for Mr. Russell, I find nothing in Scripture which tells us to start the month when "the crescent becomes visible." Rather, this entire matter is to com-

memorate the month of the year when the dual events of the Passover and Exodus (obviously under the brightest moon visible anywhere on the planet on the 15th of Abib) and the crucifixion of our Lord took place. Likewise, the full moon on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles is of paramount importance on this date, most probably because it is the actual anniversary of our Lord's birth. For these reasons, Mr. Russell's proposed solution, while it might not have been possible at the time of the original Exodus, is possible—and consistently predictable—today, and it does produce the most accurate results year round. It could very well be that the Almighty accepted the original practice of looking for the crescent as the best available method at that time, knowing that when the technology developed to determine these days correctly, the Holy Spirit could lead HIS people to the proper method. This is happening today, and I must tell you that this method is currently being adopted by many of God's people throughout the country, irrespective of "leadership" hang-ups with following the Hebrew calendar.

RESPONSE: First, it is important to note that starting the first of the month with the mean conjunction will not always put the full moon on the fifteenth of the month. The moon's orbit is not round and the time between the conjunction and the full moon can vary from 13.73 days to 15.80 days. We understand your desire for a consistently predictable calendar, but it appears that the Eternal did not set the moon in orbit so that that phases of the moon would always occur on exactly the same days in the month.

Secondly, there is some Biblical evidence of using a first crescent, the Hebrew *chodesh* ("new moon") is only a couple of vowel points different from *chadash* which means "renew"—a pretty good fit for a first crescent. Also, Genesis 1:14 said the lights were to be for "times." New moon conjunctions can only be seen during eclipses.

We are continually amazed by reasons that go like this:

The Jews fixed their calendar according to imperfect 19-year time cycles and then altered the start of years so they could keep the feasts together and be able to prepare food for the Sabbath while they were in captivity. Imagine the nerve of those sinners changing God's holy days **for their convenience**.

Yet the same people will go on to make statements like:

We realize that Moses, David, Isaiah, etc. could not have kept a calen-

dar based on a calculated true conjunction. But today we do not have anyone to sight new moons in Israel, so we will use a calculated conjunction calendar to keep God's holy days **for our convenience**.

LETTER: And I want to make it perfectly plain that there is no anti-Semitic prejudice involved; it's pure conviction based on Scripture, which current practice does not reflect. It remains to be seen whether any further turmoil will result because of this revolt (?), but it is apparent that individuals are realizing that they are solely responsible for their own salvation and therefore, more willing to defect from rigid but, in their opinion, erroneous doctrine!

RESPONSE: What evidence is there in scripture for a calculated conjunction calendar?

LETTER: You also stated that "the Edwards do not plan to depart from the Jewish calendar until"—3 conditions took place. I have enclosed a booklet entitled POSTPONEMENTS (written, published, and distributed by the same Church of God, in Truth where Mr. James Russell is a minister), which I believe more than adequately fulfills all three of your conditions. Although I have had this booklet for some time, I didn't locate it at the time I copied the prior submittals related to this question; turns out to be the best and most concise of all.

RESPONSE: I have read James Russell's booklet and some of his other information. His booklet does not fulfill any of our three requirements:

1) We are not completely convinced that his system is the one that the Eternal wants us to use. To the contrary, we are convinced that it **could not** have been the system used in the Old Testament.

2) Although Mr. Russell has written a nice, inexpensive book, its concluding chapter says anyone keeping the Jewish Calendar has accepted the "Mark of the Beast." That means that nearly all holiday-keeping Christians during the past 2000 years will "will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rev 14:10). We find this interpretation completely unacceptable as the other Biblical description of the Mark of the Beast shows it is not a calendar issue. We must realize, a great many Sabbath-keepers have lived and died without even even having access to information that would show them the problems with the Hebrew calendar. Also, Russell's book does not thoroughly explain how to find conjunctions or what to do when the conjunction occurs during the

sunset or twilight periods.

3) Russell is explaining his understanding of the calendar to other groups, but it appears that most of the groups are not accepting it—with good Biblical reason.

LETTER: In closing, I'll leave you with a question which this subject has brought to light. Forever, it seems, God's people have disagreed with the Jewish interpretation of when the Pentecost should be kept. We've said (along with Catholics and Protestants) that this Holy Day should be observed on the SUNDAY after the 7th Sabbath—which means that we have always observed "back to back" Sabbaths—one of the reasons for Postponements. By maintaining that this day should be observed on Sivan 6, which is accepted Jewish practice, they rarely are confronted with postponing their "Feast of Weeks" (Pentecost) to another day, but it must happen occasionally. When it occurs on Friday, do they advance the Holy Day to the following Monday or celebrate it on the day preceding the normal Sivan 6 date? Do you suspect this may be a large part of the reason for insistence that Sivan 6 is the proper date, i.e., no need to postpone another Holy Day every year? Just curious!

Stay well.

In Christ's service

—Ray Rousseau, Massachusetts

RESPONSE: This is a question we have never thought of before. However, I do not think there is any relationship. Actually, the Talmud records arguments among the Jews as to whether Pentecost should be Sunday or Sivan 6. The Hebrew calendar only attempts to prevent certain holy days from falling on Friday or Sunday, not all of them. Sivan 6 was on a Friday in 1996 and will be on a Sunday in 1998. The Hebrew calendar only postpones the beginning of the year, not individual months or days within the year.

One interesting tie-in between the Pentecost debate and calendars. A common argument made is, if Pentecost always falls on Sivan 6, why doesn't the Bible just say so? If the Hebrew calendar was at one time determined by new-moon sightings, then it is possible Nisan and Iyar could be either both 30 days or both 29 days—that would occasionally place Pentecost on Sivan 5 or Sivan 7. The most common occurrence would still be one 30-day month and one 29-day month (the way it always is with the fixed Hebrew calendar) which places Pentecost on Sivan 6. I have not studied the counting of Pentecost enough to write on the subject.

—NSE

Heap on Homosexuals

LETTER: January 21, 1997
Dear Norman,

You published a short article by Melvin Rhodes entitled *Caught Between Two Extremes* in the December 1996 *Servants' News*. Whilst I believe the tone and intent of that article was very good, I wonder if I could point out an error. Maybe it was just poorly phrased. It is this statement:

2. Nowhere in the Bible are those with homosexual tendencies condemned.

That is entirely untrue!

While it is axiomatic that God loves the sinner, He condemns his sinful tendencies. However, it does not mean that God does not condemn homosexual tendencies and excuse those who are that way. Romans 1 makes that point plain. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men." Rom 1:18.

Does God reveal His wrath against homosexuality? Yes! Paul wrote: "...men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion (Rom 1:27).

Rom 1:27 is unequivocal that such behaviour is perversion. Paul goes on to state that it is the product of a "depraved mind" (v 28).

Are homosexual acts and desires depraved? Yes, according to God's Word.

Are homosexual tendencies sin? Yes, according to God's Word.

Are those with homosexual tendencies condemned in the Bible? Yes! Just as are adulterers and those who allow themselves to entertain thoughts of lust, or those who desire pornography, or who harbour thoughts of greed, envy, resentment, whatever is contrary to God's holiness.

God condemns ALL godlessness—even thoughts and tendencies within us which are deviations from His holiness. We are to bring every thought into line with Christ's revealed will and mind (2 Cor 10:5).

Homosexual tendencies are deviations from His intended psychology. God condemns such thoughts. Everyone who suffers from such deviations is under condemnation until they recognise their wrong sinful desires, and repents of such by making a concerted effort to turn away from them. When a person has made that determined choice, he is no longer under God's condemnation. But, if homosexual sinful

desires keep recurring (as is the case with most who have a wrong thought pattern), he (or she) must keep repenting of them, until they have finally been submerged and replaced by a correct psychological approach, one totally in line with the Spirit.

I do feel it is important to redress the liberalism that Melvin Rhodes' false statement may have put in some people's minds. I don't think he meant to be liberal, but it could have that effect. God's grace gives no one license to deviant thoughts or tendencies. Every form of wickedness is intolerable to God. Many simply do not perceive the depth of human evils and the contrasting greatness of God's holiness. But without holiness no one will see the Creator (Heb 12:14).

You are doing a very worthwhile work in helping many lost 'sheep'. Keep up the good work. We will co-operate in whatever way we can. God bless!

Sincerely,

—Malcolm Heap, England

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for your encouragement. Probably the point of disagreement here is what did Melvin Rhodes mean by "tendencies." All of the scriptures you quoted condemned homosexual acts—not homosexual thinking or tendencies. However your quote on bringing every thought in line with Christ is also quite right. Homosexual lust, just like heterosexual lust or plain coveting are all sin. I think James explains it well:

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death (Jms 1:14-15).

James shows that being tempted and having a desire is not wrong, but letting it conceive and give birth to sin is. I personally have never had any homosexual temptations. I do not know exactly why, but I feel certain that a big part of it was my masculine father and feminine mother who clearly loved me and remain married to this day. There are others who have not been so fortunate. Ever since they can remember, they have felt little attraction to the opposite sex and plenty of attraction to their own.

But I have had other temptations, some of which some homosexuals have never had. What Mr. Rhodes was saying is that homosexuals are not sinning by existing—nor by having homosexual temptations. Just as heterosexuals are not sinning by being attracted to some other married person of the opposite sex. Both are sinning when, as James says, they let this "desire conceive" and it gives birth to sin. If they

recognize the temptation as wrong and put it out of their mind, then there is no sin.

Obviously, we should pray and take steps to avoid temptation (Matt 6:13, 1Cor 7:5). The goal of homosexuals should be to be healed to the point where they no longer have homosexual temptations, just as everyone should strive to reduce their own sources of temptations. Mr. Rhodes has started *Anchor* to help homosexuals with this process, rather than condemn them for existing, as many ministries do.

Finally, we must all realize that it is **not** a sin **not to be attracted** to the opposite sex. Paul considered it a gift that he was able to function without being married (1Cor 7:7-9). —NSE

Hope For Homosexuals

LETTER: January 26, 1997

I have been a Christian for 20+ years and have struggled with homosexuality. Today, I was searching for something besides the ex-gay ministries that after 15 years leave me without the true picture.

After reading the short introductions of *Anchor Magazine*, I am convinced that I have found what I have been looking for my entire life. An understanding ministry for homosexuals. I am a strong Christian and my cross to bear is homosexuality. I am not gay. I am a homosexual, there is a difference. I do not practice my orientation due to my respect & love for God.

—[Name withheld]

RESPONSE: We appreciate your desire to obey the Eternal in spite of your desires. We have prayed for your deliverance from this difficulty. —NSE

Hope for Heterosexuals

LETTER: January 10, 1997

Dear Mr. Edwards:

Thank you for *Servants' News*. It does seem to be filling a need for many hungry brethren. You have many good ideas and articles. We appreciate it when you stick close to the scriptures in the opinions you present in *Servants' News*.

Your article on page 17 of Vol 2 No 10 (December 1996 issue) "Hope for Homosexuals" was good in most parts, something needing to be addressed. However, it was hard to grasp in an article on being "forgiving and understanding" to ALL kinds of repentant sinners an insert which refers your readers to SN March-April 1996, page 23. I quote your enclosed remarks in "Hope for Homosexuals".

"Members of one Sabbath-observing group seemed quite willing to con-

tinue to let a man lead them who had been video-taped committing adultery only a few months before.”

Are you telling your readers there is hope in Christ for repentant sinners except for this one person? Whatever your motive, I want to talk to you like a sister and a mother: I had hoped you took a long look in the mirror since my last letter.

I fear this may not be the case. You have to judge your own heart. But as a teacher, writer, publisher and preacher, you owe a lot to God, Jesus Christ, and your readers. Please do not fall into the self-righteous pit as many others have. Remember, [name withheld] was a good teacher. Wanting to be exactly right, led him away from Christ's teaching. Why do you think his group falls off as fast as it grows?

The brethren of the Churches of God led by the Holy Spirit can see if a teacher is even honest with himself. Poor [name withheld] will get a dose of reality if he does not repent of his wanting to be right. All you men (teachers) who are so willing to stone Garner Ted Armstrong should just wish God loved you enough to hit you with a baseball bat; and that you loved God enough to repent and change as much as he is.

Does your article let your readers think homosexuals can repent and change but that Garner Ted Armstrong cannot or will not? Are you his judge? Those of us in CGI are led by Christ, not a man. Thankfully, the facts are that GTA is the spokesperson on the telecast. In the year ending, CGI had 23,403 new people wanting to learn the truths of God for the first time. None of these counted “new” are recycled brethren from church to church. Thankfully too, we have some of those. But no thanks goes to your paper or you for this. So if the telecast is still reaching new converts, then Mr. Armstrong and we with CGI are still doing Christ's bidding.

Is it your calling to lead people to Christ? Or to be right? (The real meaning of self-righteousness is to think you are right against all reason.)

Sincerely,

—[Name Withheld]

RESPONSE: Thank you for your letter. Your question, “are you telling your readers there is hope in Christ for repentant sinners except for this one person? The answer is “no.” As we have stated multiple times in our writing, the issue here **is not** repentant sinners, the issue is: “**Should people with known major sins be leaders and preachers?**” In our work at *Servants' News*, we frequently encounter people who are ready

to give up on all Sabbath keeping organizations—sometimes ready to give up on the Bible and God—because of the bad examples they see in “church leadership.” What do you say to a young prostitute who is trying to repent and live a clean lifestyle if she were to encounter Garner Ted Armstrong as a customer? How can we tell others to trust a man as a spiritual leader and at the same time recommend that they never leave their wives or daughters alone with him? If the leaders of the Eternal's people cannot or do not live righteous lives, why should anyone want to receive His spirit and try to live righteously?

Look at the qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. What are those scriptures there for? We have heard some in the Church of God, International say these are the qualifications for a **new elder**, but we can't find a Bible version that says that. Can you? If a man is righteous for a while and qualifies to be an elder, does God “save up” that righteousness and allow a certain amount of sin later on? “But when a **righteous** man turns away from his **righteousness** and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* does, shall he live? All the **righteousness** which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the **sin** which he has committed, because of them he shall die” (Ezk 18:24).

What does it take to disqualify a person as a leader? Are serial rapists, child molesters, or serial killers qualified to be church leaders if they claim they are repentant? Should we all be forgiving if our church leader repeats one of these sins from time to time? If this leader has a slick lawyer or bribes a judge and manages to stay out of jail, would that make these sins acceptable in a leader? We think you can see that there is some limit to whom we can accept as a church leader! The only question now is, does Mr. Armstrong's sin disqualify him? What do the scriptures say?

“Therefore put to death the earthly parts of your nature, **sexual immorality**, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed; for it is because of these things that God's anger is coming on those who disobey Him” (Col 3:5, JNT).

“But fornication and all uncleanness, **let it not even be named among you**, as is fitting for the saints” (Eph 5:3).

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should **abstain from sexual immorality**; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know

God” (1Thes 4:3-5).

“For certain men have crept in unawares... ungodly men, who **turn the grace of our God into licentiousness** and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ...suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (1Thes 4:3-5).

“If you instruct the brethren in those things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of **the good doctrine which you have carefully followed**” (1Tim 4:6).

Your statement, “The brethren of the Churches of God led by the Holy Spirit can see if a teacher is even honest with himself.” If you will read the statements made by the Church of God, International, listen to the tapes sent out by the CGI on the matter, read the court documents, and watch the masseuse video tape, you must conclude that Garner Ted Armstrong is not being honest with himself or anyone else! Sometimes he said he has done nothing wrong, other times he said he “had a minor slip-up,” and other times he says he has made a major mistake. When we first heard of the issue we wrote to him and asked about it. He personally responded and we will give you a quote from it:

“I don't know what she thinks is on the video tape, but the actual tape is in the hands of the FBI, and I hesitate to go into detail, since it is supposedly a “covert” investigation, and of course with the federal offense such as extortion, some rather lengthy prison sentences could be handed down, and the last thing in the world I want to do, is the extortionist's work for them.”

These were all lies! The FBI never had the tape and they never started an investigation. If you believe they did, please tell us which FBI office was doing the investigation and we will gladly print a humble retraction in *Servants' News*. When one looks at the masseuse tape, we do not see a man making an accidental slip, but a man making over 40 separate advances toward a woman who quietly rebuffed them. Are we to believe that he has never done this before? We would hope that even most married couples would realize that their partner is not interested after only a few rebuffed advances.

Please correct us if we are wrong, but we have never seen Mr. Armstrong give any sort of accurate description of his sin and “own up to it,” being primarily his fault. When David repented, he acknowledged his sin in front of all.

You said: “So if the telecast is still reaching new converts then Mr. Armstrong and we in CGI are still doing Christ's bid-

ding." Yes you are, to a limited degree. Many people and organizations are doing Christ's bidding to some degree. But why should we try to do His bidding and also knowingly violate some of his instructions? Why ignore His principles on how to select leaders? There are many others who have served the Eternal, but led a life that was a poor example. Solomon built His temple, but had too many women. Jehu executed judgment on the house of Ahab, but did not live a righteous life (2Kngs 10:30-31). Our Savior recognized some right acts of the Pharisees, even though they were terrible hypocrites (Matt 23:2,23). He even agreed with much of their teaching—it was **their works He could not accept**: "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; **for they say, and do not do**" (Matt 23:3).

Today, there are many partially-effective church organizations that are hindered by sin within their leadership. It is easy for the Church of God, International to count the number of responses to Mr. Armstrong's telecast; it is impossible to count the number of people who have given up on biblical truth when they see how he lives his life. Is it Mr. Armstrong or the Father in Heaven who brings people to conversion? **Would your organization bring in twice as many new converts with a righteous man leading it and making telecasts?** For years, the Worldwide Church of God taught that only Herbert Armstrong was capable of doing their telecast. After his death, three presenters took over the telecast, and each one of them achieved a greater average response than Herbert Armstrong did. Ron Dart and others who left the Church of God, International have far less resources than the CGI does, but they "started up from scratch" and are bringing in new responses from their broadcasts and literature. Should the CGI be afraid to try a new presenter and see if the Eternal will work through him?

You have asked that we, "Please do not fall into the self-righteous pit as many others have." Webster's Dictionary defines self-righteous as: "convinced of one's own righteousness especially in contrast with the actions and beliefs of others." We are not judging whether we are more or less righteous than Garner Ted Armstrong. We cannot predict whether we or he or anyone else will ultimately be saved or how we will be rewarded. We are sinners too. We continue in our service because our sins are **not creating major stumbling blocks** for other brethren and new converts. Garner Ted Armstrong is disqualified as a spiritual

leader because:

1) His major sins are public knowledge—they are a part of a public lawsuit and there are hundreds of copies of a video tape of his sins in circulation.

2) He only seeks forgiveness for a "covered up" and minimized account of his sin—He does not openly acknowledge the truth about his sins and repent of what he has actually done.

You ask, "Is it your calling to lead people to Christ?" Yes, that is certainly part of it. It is also our calling to help teach the body of Christ how to lead others to Him. We encourage people to attend with a lot of Sabbath keeping congregations—we do not claim that we, or some one group, has more truth than the others. But how can we lead people to Christ and include your organization in that process when we know that some day in the next few years many members will probably see a newspaper headline about the settlement Garner Ted Armstrong (and possibly CGI) is paying for his sexual misconduct?

We hope and pray that Garner Ted Armstrong will be granted repentance and receive forgiveness. But the Bible instructions on church leaders gives no "exception clause" for a disqualified leader, even though he may still be doing some good works. Our Father in Heaven, and the Church of God, International are quite capable of doing the Work without him.

—Norman & Marleen Edwards

The Marriage Contracts—We Did It!

LETTER:

January 13, 1997

Dear Mr. Edwards,

Your recent articles on marriage were most welcome and I applaud your courage to challenge some dear and fervently believed assumptions! Recently, a small congregation was upset over a young couple who were discovered to be living together while plans for their wedding ceremony were being made. Because they have "refused to repent", they are being ostracized by their so-called friends and brethren. While not necessarily condoning the actions of this couple, when I suggested there might have been an overreaction, or possibly it was none of their business, I have myself have been attacked as being illiterate and/or of rejecting God's Commandments.

On the contrary, it is obvious to anyone who truly studies the Scriptures on marriage that, by living together, this couple is already married and were seeking approval of family and friends with the ceremonial we have come to expect and

demand for "validity." I hope all these people have seen your first article and are seriously re-considering their ideas, judgments, and actions.

I laughed when I read the title of the article, "The Marriage Contract: Does anyone really do it?" The answer in our case is a resounding, "Yes!" (And this before anyone told us we could or should).

I wrote you previously about my interest in the Judaic origins of our faith. It was out of this interest that I had long-desired to have a "Jewish " wedding. Thankfully, my husband-to-be was equally enthusiastic about the idea, so that is what we did!

One of the key features of a Jewish wedding is the **Ketubbah or marriage contract**. After studying texts from Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform sources, we composed our own document which addressed our specific needs and concerns. Although, not as detailed as the contract quoted in "Living by the Rules" (which any long married couple would chuckle at as absurd), our document does address the issues you mentioned, i.e., our expectations about "mutual support and cooperation, a sexual relationship, and responsibility for the children." More specifically, guided by Scripture, we defined our roles and responsibilities in the relationship, and clarified the financial assets we brought together by the marriage. This document is not signed by the man and woman themselves, but rather by their individual witness/representatives. (It is ratified by the woman's acceptance of some token offered by the man—usually a plain gold ring worn on the wife's right index, pointing finger.) "In Jewish law, anyone may perform a wedding, for Jews are essentially married by consent. The passing of a ring, or any object of value, from groom to bride represents a contract which is valid if it is witnessed by two other adult male Jews." ("Judaism" ed by Arthur Hertzberg, Washington Square Press, 1961, page 84.)

If there is to be a ceremony (as we chose), before it begins, the groom and witnesses (with any officiant) sign all the marriage documents (Ketubbah, license, etc.). In modern practice the Betrothal Agreement is usually signed on this same day so that the couple requires no legal divorce if, for any reason, they fail to consummate the marriage. In the actual ceremony, after an opening blessing, the groom is asked to verbally confirm his agreement to the marriage and offers his token to the bride. Then an honored guest is asked to read the Ketubbah aloud to all witnesses present. After its reading, the bride is asked

if she accepts its terms, and if so, is given the token and the document for her life long safe-keeping. This is followed by seven blessings being pronounced on the couple (we asked seven friends to each read one of these). After this, groom and bride drink from one glass which is then crushed beneath the groom's foot—assuring no others may ever “drink of their cup of blessings.” Then the couple turns together and is introduced to the company as man and wife.

While I would take nothing for the beautiful memories of this day and ceremony, it is important to remember, as you stress, that almost none of this was essential for us to be married in God's sight. I was rather CONCERNED BY THE LETTER BY DONALD STECKEY, however. While a state license is not needed in God's sight, it is generally required in the sight of man! Besides submitting ourselves to governmental authority (as long as it does not contradict God's law—and this does not), we are encouraged to “give no appearance of evil” by flaunting benign conventions. The “common law” marriage is becoming increasingly invalid today, and one should check state laws carefully! Besides these issues, if a widow should desperately need rightful veterans or social security benefits, it will be nearly impossible without a marriage license.

Further, on the issue of then requiring a legal divorce: If God is present with both parties, they will not be seeking a divorce—and if man or woman (or both) have removed themselves from God's Presence to reach this point, then they better have someone/something (i.e. the appointed earthly authorities) to mediate between the two! Let us not be so paranoid of government (which God has allowed whether we like it or not) that we foolishly put ourselves in real jeopardy! The Jews have their own religious authority, the “betdin” which mediates their divorce proceedings: unless the church is willing to assume such a similar practice, we should not casually dismiss the protections offered by the secular state! **This is not an issue to be taken lightly and I hope you will make this point to your readers!**

Thank you for an excellent publication! Please accept the enclosed to help you in your work.

Sincerely, —Sadie Morgan
221 Ivy St.
Rossville, GA 30741

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for your interesting letter. You are absolutely right about the couple who was living together before they were “married.”

According to Old Testament law, a betrothed couple could consummate their marriage at any time, and it was considered that—a marriage. They may not have a contract to begin with, but that can be agreed to later. In some places, a betrothal agreement is signed as soon as the betrothal is arranged and it covers most of the things that go into a marriage agreement. That way, any sooner-than-planned marriages are covered by an agreement.

Thank you very much for your own personal story. Some aspects of the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony can be found in the Bible, but many cannot. It does seem that much of it has a lot of positive meaning.

Yes, we cannot emphasize enough the responsibility that comes with marriage. Probably, some couple will read one of our articles and conclude that they do not need the state or the ministry to marry them. They will get out a piece of paper and write “I love you, you love me, a married couple, now are we,” sign it, and start living together. **They would be much better off going to some kind of ministry and getting a state license than to commit the above thoughtless act.**

The point of our article was to teach people that they cannot put the responsibilities of their marriage on the ministry or on the state—that they should do more planning than the ministry typically encourages, that they should write down their expectations in a contract and sign them. For those who want to spend probably hundreds of hours looking at state law books, it is possible to record a common law contract and create a marriage that will be upheld by courts and possibly make provisions for the family even better than what a state license would. The point of this is that you are still not legally required to get either the state's or the ministry's permission to marry in the USA. **However, this is the hard way to do it, not the easy way.**

A couple who wants to make special provisions for each other can often do so with various legal instruments used **in addition** to a state license. For example, husbands and wives can place their assets in various kinds of trusts so that they will have full access to everything without expensive and time consuming legal probate in the event one of them dies. Also, they can sign prenuptial agreements that control things such as how their assets or family will be divided in the unlikely event of a divorce.

If there is any lesson we can teach, it is that marriage is the second most

important decision a person will ever make, and it should not be done in a hurry. A poor decision can greatly harm your whole life.

Thanks again for your letter. —NSE

The Error of Racism

LETTER: December 25, 1996

Dear Mr. Edwards,

Thank you for publishing the letter by Mrs D S. Many members of the churches of God would do well, to do as Mrs D S has done and learn more about the beliefs of the Jews. Jewish concepts of righteousness are often far more truly Biblical than traditional American, Protestant concepts; although one can find more than a little nonsense and superstition in Jewish folklore. The churches of God would be more righteous if they moved towards Messianic Jewishness and away from the 19th century ‘American Adventism.’ **Three subjects people could learn a lot about by reading Jewish writings are** (1) the human spirit and the state of the dead — it is nearly impossible to understand the Biblical story of Lazarus and the Rich Man without understanding 1st century Jewish thought regarding the state of the dead and the human spirit; (2) concern for the poor and the righteousness of those who have mercy on the poor, and (3) the nations and places on earth where the so-called lost tribes of Israel emigrated. Everything I have seen that was written by legitimate Jewish scholars regarding Israel refutes Anglo-Israelist racial dogma which many ex-WCG members seem to love. And most ancient Jewish writers, who wrote about where the so-called lost tribes could be found, wrote things that contradicted Anglo-Israelist dogma.

RESPONSE: We would like to point out that it is possible to believe that the USA, UK, and other nations are the modern day lost ten tribes without being racist. We believe these nations today were being blessed because of the promises to Abraham, not because of our own righteousness, and that they will be punished for their sin and for misusing their blessings. We believe that national origin has nothing to do with who can be saved or how they will be rewarded (1Cor 3:13, 12:13).

We will have to agree with you, though, that many groups who support Anglo-Israelism believe that some races are spiritually or physically superior to each other. That is wrong. We believe the entire collective human family is much like the body of Christ in that different

members have different gifts or skills, but there is no way to say what part is better—we need all of it (1Cor 12:14-27).

We are aware of various other small groups that the Jews recognize as the lost 10 tribes of Israel. These are probably also part of the lost 10 tribes, but the promise to Abraham of being like the stars of heaven can only be fulfilled by the major nations of today.

LETTER: Mrs D S provided a valuable service for the readers of *Servants' News* by exposing the heresy of the Anglo-Israelist Dan Gayman, and also the error of the Australian "Friends of the Sabbath" who apparently offered "the right hand of fellowship" to Dan Gayman. I wonder if the Australian "Friends of the Sabbath" would have welcomed and accepted and spoke well of an alleged Sabbath keeper who was a proud and unrepentant murderer? Or someone who was an avowed witch or shaman or juju man, who also claimed to observe the Sabbath? Or a Gay activist who advocates homosexual marriage and is the leader of a Gay Sabbatarian church? Whether they would have welcomed sinners such as that I don't know. But there is little difference between giving the right hand of fellowship to a racist who teaches the "Satan's seed" heresy and/or the "mud people" heresy (both of which are popular with Anglo-Israelists) and giving the right hand of fellowship to a high handed sinner who is a murderer or occultist or Gay activist! I wonder if they would have welcomed a "black" racist who believes in keeping the Sabbath, but also believes in the Black Muslim myth that the "white" race is a race of devils that was created by Yacub the "big headed scientist?" Would they have been as accepting of, and as comfortable with, a "black" racist as a "white" racist? That is an interesting question to ponder.

RESPONSE: Dan Gayman seems to be adept at not presenting his more offensive beliefs to audiences who are not ready to accept them. I do not think that the Australian "Friends of the Sabbath" had any knowledge of them.

LETTER: It can be a virtue to be inclusive and tolerant of others who may have beliefs that differ somewhat from our own, but one has to draw the line somewhere. And the line should be drawn when it comes to sinners who love and practice the greatest sins listed in Revelation 21:8 and 22:15. Sorcery is one of those great sins, and the Apostle Peter had no qualms about rejecting Simon the sorcerer, even though Simon claimed to be a believer in Jesus Christ. And Jesus criticized the

Thyatirans for putting up with "Jezebel" who taught idolatry and sexual immorality which are two of those great sins. No one can be saved who loves and practices any of those greatest of sins that we find in Revelation 21 and 22.

If one can admit that all humans are created "in the image of God", then one must also admit, if one is rational, that anyone who loves and teaches the doctrine that Jews are "the seed of Satan" and non-whites are subhuman beasts is someone who loves and teaches a lie. If one can admit that non-whites can receive God's Holy Spirit and be saved, then one must also admit that there are, and have been, non-whites who are spiritual brethren of Jesus Christ. **Jesus said that all who "hear the word of God and do it" are His brethren** (Luke 8:19-21). Jesus also said that anyone who would call his spiritual brother in Christ a "despicable fool" would be in danger of eternal damnation (Mat 5:22). **How much greater danger would one be in if he claims to be a disciple of Christ and calls the brethren of Jesus, who have God's Spirit, damned children of Satan or damned beasts simply because of their so-called race or their ethnicity?** (Anyone who says that certain races cannot be saved is saying that all members of those races, regardless of how righteous they may be, are eternally and hopelessly damned by God!) Paul rebuked Peter for not wanting to be seen eating with Gentiles; and **should not one be rebuked for teaching that non-whites are damned beasts?**

RESPONSE: The doctrine that only certain races can be saved is certainly wrong. However, probably all of the original 12 apostles believed only Jews could be saved for several years. Yes, just as Peter needed a vision from the Eternal to see his error, then needed to be rebuked by Paul, so must the people who teach the Satan's seed doctrines be rebuked. But before we answer the matter, we will hear it first (Prov 18:31), so we can show them from the scriptures in their own terminology where they are wrong. Will we be able to change the minds of the leaders of these groups? Usually not, but we cannot be sure. But if we can answer their errors well, we may be able to convince other people to reject this error, or to never accept it in the first place.

There are plenty of scriptures indicating that people of various races joined ancient Israel, and the New Testament Church. Some of the scriptures used to teach the "Satan's Seed" doctrine are obviously misinterpreted. We hope to do an extensive article on the subject later.

LETTER: John said: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren"; and "He who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." (1 Jn 3:14-15). **Any racist who condemns people because of their so-called race and who refuses to accept the fact that all humans are made in the image of God and all who "work righteousness" are accepted by God is a sinner in whom the love of God does not abide.** James said that those who "have respect of persons", those who are prejudiced, are sinners who do not love their neighbor as they love themselves (James 2). Racists love themselves far more than they love their neighbor, if their neighbor is of a different race. **And by putting down and condemning their neighbor who is not of their race, racists lift themselves up and increase their own self-esteem.**

RESPONSE: Racists are not necessarily people who do not love their neighbor—they just do not know who their neighbors are. Christ had to tell the story of the "Good Samaritan" to a lawyer who understood he needed to love his neighbor, but did not understand that his neighbor included other races (Luke 10:25-37).

Nevertheless, I must agree that most racists have a proud look about them—they act as if they are better than others. This is one of the things that the Eternal hates (Prov 6:17).

LETTER: I know it is very hard for people to humble themselves and repent of sin, that is human nature. And it is extremely hard for people to humble themselves and repent of sins that boost their self-esteem and thereby make them feel good. **The virulent sin of racism does boost the self-esteem of racists, and that sin has been rampant in America from the very beginning.** The majority of Americans, including those in the churches of God, have been adversely affected by that sin whether they choose to admit it or not. **It is therefore very hard for Americans, especially those who are so-called "whites", to understand how great a sin is the racist belief in white supremacy; and it is very hard for them to comprehend the enormity of the evils that racism has caused.** Racism along with the serving of mammon have been America's great and systemic sins. American Church of God preachers should have been incessantly lifting up their voices like trumpets and telling people to repent of racism and to bring forth fruit that indicates repentance. But when it comes to

racism, especially when it comes to white supremacy, the trumpet has usually been silent, or at best has only given an anemic and uncertain sound. Why? **Because many churches of God have in them persons with racist beliefs and racist attitudes who are unable to see how great is the sin of racism in themselves and in the world.** And also because many of the churches of God teach Anglo-Israelism as religious dogma, and **the very spirit of Anglo-Israelism is a spirit of racism.** One might ask, "How can anyone rightly say that the spirit of Anglo-Israelism is a spirit of racism?" The answer is this: any religious doctrine that (1) emphasizes race more than grace, (2) emphasizes alleged differences between the so-called races rather than our common humanity as descendants of Adam made in the image of God, (3) emphasizes skin color and racial purity more than righteousness and moral purity, (4) insists or implies that one race is innately superior to others, and (5) makes almost an idol of whiteness, is a doctrine that evinces a spirit of racism. **And one can find all of those things in writings expounding Anglo-Israelism.** I know that those church of God people who have faith in Anglo-Israelism insist that there is nothing racist about that teaching, and I have no illusions that anything I say will shake their faith in Anglo-Israelism. But it is not by accident that the most violent and hate filled racist groups in America today are "Identity Christians" who love Anglo-Israelism. The teachings of Anglo-Israelism, unlike the teachings of Jesus Christ, do not have to be perverted and misinterpreted to be acceptable to white supremacists. If Anglo-Israelism was an anti-racist doctrine that unequivocally condemned white supremacy, one would not find it being enthusiastically embraced by white supremacists and white racist hate groups, in an attempt to prove their racist beliefs are supported by the Holy Bible. "By their fruits you shall know them!"

RESPONSE: I have certainly known people who have believed all five of the problems you mention with British-Israelism. However, my understanding has never been that salvation was any more or less available to a person based on their race, nor was race ever imputed as righteousness.

There are plenty of other people who have taken true Bible doctrines and perverted them: The "elect", the 144,000, the "Philadelphia era", and numerous other classifications have been used to single out some group of people as being more righteous than all of the others. Just because

these passages have been greatly misused does not mean that they do not have a right application. Similarly, I believe history and scripture show where modern Israel is today—and those people who are modern-day Israel ought to be setting a righteous example to the rest of the world rather than patting themselves on the back and saying "I'm thankful that I'm not like other men..." (Luke 18:10-14).

LETTER: The Australian "Friends of the Sabbath" were apparently unable to see that the sin of racism is as wicked as the sin of witchcraft or the sin of idolatry.

Sincerely,

William Washington, Ohio

RESPONSE: Those of us planning conferences should make some effort to understand the beliefs of the speakers we invite, but we cannot do this perfectly. As 1 Timothy 5:4 states, "Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later." If Dan Gayman stayed away from his racist doctrines, many of his other doctrines are similar to ours. We would certainly not invite him to speak at any of our gatherings as long as he publicly holds this doctrine.

Servants' News wrote to Dan Gayman, (Church of Israel, Schell City, Missouri) and received a reply dated March 13, 1997:

GAYMAN: "I have, and continue to teach that all races are the distinct creation of God, each with their own unique mark of God's ownership upon them, and each having their own place and function to fill in God's plan for this earth. **I do not believe that all races are descended from Adam,** because to believe this would be to endorse evolutionary humanism which I reject in total. We teach that God has a plan for all of his creation, whatever their racial composition, and that as to form and function they are uniquely different, one from another."

SN COMMENT: These sound like nice words, but they mean that some races are little different than the animals that the Eternal created. We have not done all of our research yet, but it seems that Gayman believes that Adam and Eve, being two, could not have three races within themselves. But since each person has two completely different sets of chromosomes, Adam and Eve could have had four races within their genes. People who breed animals know that over many years a great number of varieties can be bred from just a few distinct, healthy parent animals.

GAYMAN: "We believe that all Jews are descended from the house of Judah excepting those who are called the syn-

agogue of Satan as in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9, which are obviously connected to John 8:44 and 1 John 3:12."

SN COMMENT: This is the point where we need to spend some time in investigation. For example, John 8:44 says: "You [Jews] are of your father the devil..." The Satan's seed doctrine takes this very literally. But do they also take Matthew 16:23 literally where Christ "turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan!""? If so, then Peter is Satan. It gets more confusing when we read Luke 22:3 "Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve." Was this Peter (who was Satan) entering into Judas? Then what happened to Peter (and Satan) when Judas died?

Apparently they use 1 John 3:10-12 to prove that the children of Cain are children of the Devil. However, if we start in verse 8 we find that whoever commits sin is of the Devil. Well, all of us have sinned (Rom 3:23). And we were all letting the Devil work in us when we sinned. And, just like Peter, we repent after Satan uses us, and Satan leaves. We would hope that it will become obvious to others that these scriptures are not talking about physical children of the devil, but people who are allowing the devil to work in them.

Some of Gayman's literature had these statements:

GAYMAN: "We believe that Biblical, genetic Israel in Jesus Christ is the Church, identified among the Anglo, Saxon, Celtic, Scandinavian, Germanic and kindred people of the world."

"We believe that election is by race, and salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ."

SN COMMENT: There is no question here that Gayman believes salvation is available only to certain races. Beside being contrary to multiple scriptures on the subject, this also opens up the question of what percentage of the "savable races" would a person need to be in order to be eligible for salvation? The answer cannot be 100%, because the scriptures do record a few gentiles mixed in with Israelite blood lines. So, wherever someone sets the percentage, there will be cases where people are not quite sure of the racial identity of great grandpa so-and-so and therefore may not know if they are "savable or not." Or do some of these groups believe they have the right to "decide" whether certain individuals are "savable" or just sort of "animals."

It all sounds scary!

It all sounds wrong!

We hope to write on the subject after we study it in depth.

—NSE ☐

“Cult, Occult ...” from page 1 who is doing the “cult calling.” Many “Christian Cult-watch” groups classify any group a cult if they do not believe in the Trinity, do not accept the “Apostles’ Creed” or do not accept certain other common Christian doctrines. Others define cults primarily in terms of how secretive they are or how much control they exert over their members.

With thousands of religious groups in the USA alone, nearly every shade of doctrine and control exists in one group or another. As a general rule:

Many religious cults frequently:

1. Are started by one very persuasive teacher/leader.
2. Have a tightly organized and restricted membership.
3. Are convinced they have the only acceptable way of life.

Many religious cults do NOT:

1. Have any “occult” or “new age” connections or beliefs.
2. Have radical or violent tendencies.
3. Use “brain washing” to get or keep members.

Some religious cults may:

1. Rely on fear to keep members in line.
2. Rely on isolation to keep members away from other teachings.
3. Disguise their actual teachings when dealing with the public.
4. Use Christian terminology, but be far from Biblical teachings.

If you do not accept the Trinity doctrine, do not belong to a large “Christian denomination” and believe that you should “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), you will be classified as a “cult member” by some people. However, one can probably avoid being classified as a “dangerous cult” member by following these Biblical principles:

1. Allow others to attend your services. (While you may choose to teach potential new converts in Bible studies rather than services, people should not be refused from services if they come—see 1Cor 14:24).
2. Do not forbid members to read literature from elsewhere (Eph 4:14).
3. Do not teach that your groups is the only way to salvation (1Cor 3:4-8, Phil 1:15-18, 1Jn 2:27).
4. Do not socially ostracize people who leave your group (Matt 5:44, Luke 15:22-32, Jude 1:22-23, 2Cor 2:6-8, Gal 6:1).

Following these guidelines will not
Mar/Apr 1997

eliminate all persecution—our Savior said it would come (John 15:20). However, if we are persecuted, **it should be for righteousness sake** (Matt 5:10), not for our own mistakes.

What is the Occult?

Generally, it is a **collection of beliefs and practices** that are based on the idea that there is a supernatural world, and that Man can “tap into” it in order to control his environment or other people through **secret, special knowledge and rituals**.

The words “Occult” and “Cult” do **not** have the same origin, and are not specifically related. Therefore:

1. An individual **can** be involved in *occult* activities without belonging to a *cult*.
2. An individual can belong to a *cult* and **not** be involved in any *occult* activities at all.

Examples of common **occult** activities: Ouija boards, fortune-telling, astrology, witchcraft, tarot cards, “dungeons and dragons,” voodoo, palm reading, spiritism (contacting the dead). Most occult groups have “levels” of knowledge—new “converts” are only told a little of their beliefs. They are allowed to learn more only as they show their loyalty and become completely entrenched in the group. *Some* occult groups actually teach (either openly or secretly) that they worship Satan.

What is “New Age”?

New Age is an adjective that describes the **collection of beliefs and practices** that are based on the idea that Mankind is about to enter into a “new age” of peace, prosperity and spiritual enlightenment brought about by Man’s own efforts to change himself. Many “New Age” teachers believe Man will be able to do this as a result of contact with “higher spiritual beings” who will teach him to be “at one” with the universe.

The term “New Age Movement” is a fairly recent term, though most of the ideas have been around for a long time with other names. New age ideas come from humanism, eastern religions, false Christianity, paganism, and the **occult**. There is no single group, governing board, or even a specific group of groups that define the “New Age Movement.” People or organizations usually become labeled “New Age” because they simply choose to adopt the name.

Examples of “New Age” ideas and

practices include reincarnation, transcendental meditation, other types of non-Biblical meditation, “channeling”, astral projection, belief that special physical or spiritual power is available through certain rituals or objects, belief that humans are not special creations in the image of God and are of no more value than animals and plants, belief that there is not an “external” Creator God who made the universe—rather that “god” is within everyone already just waiting to be tapped into.

How Do Cult, Occult and New Age Ideas Affect Us?

Some **occult** and **New Age** practices and ideas may be counterfeits of actual Biblical ideas and practices. However, many serious Bible students are concerned that occult and new age ideas and practices are creeping into “Christian” television, books and tapes—especially into family counselling and self-help material. This is happening in some places.

On the other hand, some ministries have acquired the habit of labeling nearly every teaching, Bible translation or group that they disagree with as “New Age”. This is particularly easy to do since there is no clear, precise definition of “New Age.” Sometimes, Biblically sound ideas or ministries unjustly receive the “New Age” label.

What can we do?

As mentioned previously, we probably cannot avoid being called “**cult members**” by some, but we can be open about our practices and if possible, “live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18).

We should certainly avoid the **occult**—there is virtually nothing good there. A significant amount of clothing, jewelry and toys are designed around occult symbols and should be avoided.

We should seek to avoid things that are part of the false practices of the New Age movement, though we should not depart from truth just because someone might label it “New Age.”

As always, the final word is not someone’s label, but the Scriptures. Let us “search the scriptures daily, whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Finally, as John warned:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1Jn 4:1).

—Norman Edwards & Pam Dewey

Literature List

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

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

Mature Literature

The Apple of God's Eye by Jim Rector, 13 pages. God's love for us is far greater than we imagine, and we often take it for granted.

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

A Call to Arms by Jim Rector, 16 pages. Lessons for today from Revelation 2-3 including the oppressive doctrine of the Nicolaitans and the doctrine of Balaam.

Basic Bible Study Tools by Richard Nickels. 36 pages. An excellent summary of available Bible study aids and how to use them. Samples of many study aids included.

Biblical Calendar Basics by Norman S. Edwards, 10 pages. Introduction to the issues about the Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)

Christ's Birth—Hanukkah—and the New Testament Believer by Eric Paschall, 5 pages. Our Messiah was conceived near Hanukkah and born near Tabernacles.

Does the New Covenant Do Away with the Letter of the Law? by Eric V. Snow. 42 pages—revised Jan. 1996. A "must read" for those who feel it does.

Did Christ Reorganize the Church? by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1939, 8 pages. Very different than his later approach: Christ never set up a hierarchical government.

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

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

Just What Does the New Covenant Do? by Joseph Chunko, 18 pages. Explanation of the difference between the law, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Utilising the Members in the Local Congregations and In the Work: A System to Ensure Fair Opportunity for All by Craig White & others. 26 pages. Valuable ideas for working within a church organization.

Where Is the True Church Today? by Jack M. Lane, 18 pages. How can there be so many similar groups, yet one true church? What is required of members? Read and see.

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

Basic Literature

The Bible Sabbath: Seventh Day or First Day? (From the Bible Sabbath Association) 2 pages. Basic Sabbath tract.

Does the Bible Permit Christians to Eat "Unclean" Meat in New Testament Times? by Steven M Collins. 14 pages.

Christian Educational Ministries Correspondence Course by Ron Dart. First lesson from SN. Others free from CEM.

God's Purpose for Your Life by Fred McGovarin, 40 pages, half-size booklet. A "first booklet" for people just becoming interested in the Truth. It introduces Hebrew names (Yahweh and Yashua) for God and Jesus.

How Do We Give to the Eternal? by Richard Tafoya & Norman Edwards, 36 pages. Biblical study of giving and tithing.

The Key to the Book of Revelation edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 12-page 9"x4" booklet.

Lazarus and the Rich Man edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.

The Resurrection of Christ—Is It a Fact? by Don Hudgel. 2 page tract for those skeptical of the Bible & resurrection.

Why Do You Observe Sunday? edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.

Study Resources and Information

ANCHOR Magazine edited by Melvin Rhodes. One free 16 page sample issue. Reaching out to recovering homosexuals.

Barnabas Ministries Mission Statement by Alan Ruth. 2 pages.

The Christian Beacon Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter "for the shared ministry of the Royal Priesthood."

A Church of God Ministry Order Form by Lon Lacey & friends. 1 page. Free literature on nature of God & Satan, Biblical law, prophecy, history, church government, etc.

The Fellowship Commentator by F. Paul Haney. Sample 8 page issue of free quarterly newsletter.

Friends of the Family Lending Library Order Form by Rod McKown, 2 pages. Check out family books 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.

Hebrew Roots Sample 24-page issue of free newsletter with emphasis on the Hebrew roots of "Christian" belief.

History Research Projects Order Form by Craig White. 4 pages. Hard-to-find books on the origins of nations.

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. 16 pages.

A Living Relationship with Original Language Text Unfolding by John Purvins. First issue of free Christian living magazine and Hebrew-Greek study course, 38 pages.

Living Room Church of God (LRCOG) Directory edited by Robert Bodkin. 8 pages. Find a place to fellowship!

Sabbath History edited by Leon Lyell in Australia. One free sample issue of 26-page newsletter about the history of Sabbath keepers & groups. There is nothing else like it.

The Sabbath Sentinel One free sample issue of 16 page glossy magazine—doctrinal & human interest articles. With Bible Sabbath Association order form: Sabbath books & tracts.

Servants' News & Norman Edwards Statement of Receipts and Expenses, 2 pages. (Always sent to contributors.)

The WAY Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter of doctrinal articles relating to the Biblical way of life.