

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 3, No. 7

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

Sept/Oct 1997

United Church of God—An International Association

Two Views of the Future

A Lamentation for the UCG-AIA

By Norman S. Edwards

The year of 1994 was very troubling for many in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG). Numerous members and ministers began to realize that the organization that they once considered “God’s True Church of Earth” was changing many of the doctrines that distinguished it from so many other church organizations. The WCG was accepting the Trinity doctrine, and abandoning the Sabbath, Holy Days, and clean foods. It appeared to be transforming itself into just another Protestant denomination.

The long-held belief in hierarchical government—that members were responsible for following the WCG leaders—and that God would correct those leaders had failed! If the Trinity and other Protestant doctrines were correct, how could the WCG have always been “God’s one True Church” and reject such common teaching? But a great many WCG members did not believe these doctrines were correct, and began to realize that the Eternal might be testing them to see whether they would follow their Bible understanding or the teachings of men.

Some ministers and brethren thought, “Maybe the Eternal’s top-down government works through a man and not an organization—and the Eternal leaves it up to us to find the right man!” So they looked around and found that the Philadelphia Church of God had formed in 1990, the Church of the Great God in 1992, and the Global Church of God in 1993. The more

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What is the UCG’s Doctrinal Position?

By Craig Martin White, UCG-AIA Member

Some have questioned the UCG’s doctrinal position. They say that we left the WCG only over the issue of the Sabbath and Holy Days. Others think that no WCG changes from the last decade have been accepted; while some accept all of the changes up to the WCG’s proclaiming of the Trinity doctrine. Almost any other imaginable combination has been voiced at one time.

Still others feel that we shouldn’t worry too much in terms of doctrine except the Sabbath and Holy Days. And a few think that we make too much of doctrine. It is high time we explored the UCG’s position to place a brake on the confusion and distrust that has arisen.

“Our Constitution makes clear what our fundamentals of beliefs are. Have you read them lately?”, asks Dennis Luker in his excellent article “The Importance of Our Governing Documents”, *New Beginnings*, 14 July 1997, page 2. Our governing document is so important that it should be discussed at open forums each year by the local congregations. After all, this is what we were promised on several occasions, but was never delivered.

One person said that they were horrified that senior UCG persons had announced that the famous “18 truths” would more-or-less serve as the basic model for our doctrines. And, as far as I know they still do, as there has been no retraction of them and they seem to form the basis of our doctrine.

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We publish Craig White’s article at right because we believe it accurately describes, from a member’s point of view, the serious difficulties facing the UCG-AIA. While we do not think the advice at right will produce the intended result, we believe it is better than the UCG-AIA’s presently-drifting course. Our assessment of the problem and advice to the UCG-AIA members is at left.

—*Servants’ News*

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Vol. 3, No. 7

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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: Tim & Jeanice Davis, Marleen Edwards, Robert & Christine Feith, Missi Lara, Jon D. Pike, Ann Wibbelsman
Technical Services: George Dewey
Office Administrator: Pam Dewey
Contributors: Many! Thanks to everyone!

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Servants' News
 PO Box 220
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Fax: 517-543-8899
E-Mail: 75260.1603@CompuServe.com
Internet: http://www.best.com/~oasis7/sn/

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Canada: *Servants' News*, R.R. #2, Hastings, Ontario, K0L 1Y0
Europe: *Servants' News*, Gulpen 122, 4852 Hombourg, Belgium
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The following accounts are factual to the best of our knowledge, but we do not have the space to include the dozens of pages of

letters or conversation transcripts to prove the issues. We encourage anyone who doubts any of these stories to talk to the people involved. The person listed under "Info" after each story can help you obtain documents or contact any of the people involved. We think you will find them friendly and helpful. You may contact the UCG-AIA by calling 818-294-0800. After each story, we give lessons that we hope will be helpful to ministers and members.

We believe most of the UCG-AIA difficulties are due to a vast difference in opinion as to what the Eternal wants. The home office staff, and to a lesser degree, the ministry tend to believe that "God has put them in their position and that whatever they do must be in accordance with His will because He is not stopping them from doing it." Almost any action—including lying—can be justified from this theory. On the other hand, the membership, and to a lesser degree the ministry, see the example of the Worldwide Church of God as proof that God does not always correct the ministry. We try to avoid condemning individuals, but sometimes the facts speak so strongly that it just happens. —NSE

UCG Accidentally Creates Home Fellowship in Minneapolis

Apparently, it all started when a mother brought her pre-kindergarten boy to a Sabbath-school class and asked if she could remain in the class with him to give him confidence. The teacher told the mother that if the child was not ready to stay in class without his mother, that he could not be in class. Devastated, the mother sought the help of a member of the Minneapolis congregation's board and advisory council, Tim Lindholm. Later on, the local minister, Jim Servidio, told Tim Lindholm that his attempt to intercede for the mother was a sin.

Clashes continued on other issues such as "are members allowed to sit in and listen to board meetings," and "can members attend Bible studies not sponsored by UCG-AIA." Later, the church's local board was dissolved without the knowledge of some of the board mem-

Seven Local UCG-AIA Congregations Yield Lessons

bers. Finally, on June 4, 1997 Jim Servidio wrote a letter to four families telling them that they either had to promise to abide by 8 points in the letter or leave the congregation. These points essentially stated that the UCG-AIA hierarchy is God's way of dealing with His people, and anyone having any disagreements with anything done there may not speak to anyone about it but the minister or his superiors. The letter clearly stated that many of the changes that these families desired would probably never be implemented.

The four families never expected to be "kicked out" in this fashion; none of them intended to start their own group. Later, they asked Jim Servidio if they could appeal the decision, but he declined to meet with them. As this goes to press, a meeting is scheduled with two UCG-AIA headquarters representatives.

A few weeks after the letter was sent, the four families began meeting each Sabbath, rotating homes and responsibilities. There were 23 attending regularly; upon seeing Servidio's letter, several others decided to leave UCG-AIA. Each week, a different family was the facilitator—responsible for selecting a sermon tape or guest speaker, selecting songs, planning a potluck, etc. After four months, there are over 40 regularly attending, and they have had to find a hall. As many as 70 have attended, coming from UCG-AIA, CGI, WCG, and other groups. This small fellowship is now thinking about what they can do to reach out to serve and/or teach others. During the same time, the UCG-AIA congregation has dropped from 140 down to about 110.

Lesson for ministry: If a minister's goal is a congregation that is obedient to the home office, writing an ultimatum to "independently thinking members" is probably a favor to everyone involved. Each group can then go about the business of doing what they believe is right. If a minister is interested in keeping his congregation intact, ultimatums are probably not a good idea.

Lesson for members: We attribute the success of this new group to the hum-

ble, but capable people who needed a place to fellowship. There was no one who wanted to "lead a group." Others need to realize that

they do not need a dynamic leader or a powerful speaker to start a local fellowship, but only a desire to serve the Eternal and the faith to act on that desire.

Info: Tim Lindholm, 612-525-5012.

Elkhart Congregation Splits Up

As new and often unwelcome doctrines were being dispensed from the WCG in 1994, many members in the Elkhart, Indiana congregation realized that they could not continue there. Steve Shepherd had already resigned from the full-time WCG ministry and was intending to move to Oregon for business interests. Many of the Elkhart brethren formed an independent congregation (before UCG-AIA), asked Steve Shepherd to pastor it, and then asked him to represent them at the Indianapolis UCG-founding conference. He produced tapes of his sermons, many of which are still sought out and heard by hundreds of people far away from Indiana. He gained a reputation as a strong Bible teacher.

As the months moved on, the UCG-AIA and the Elkhart congregation had disagreements. Near the end of 1996, Steve Shepherd resigned from the full-time UCG ministry, never spoke strongly for or against UCG-AIA, continued to serve locally, but also made it clear that he would eventually move to Oregon. The Elkhart group became quite divided. Some wanted to completely unite with UCG-AIA, others wanted to become totally independent, and some were "in the middle." During the spring of 1997, the congregation broke up. People scattered in several directions. A considerable amount of "hard-feelings" still exist within each group and between the groups. Steve Shepherd preached Holy Day sermons for the new independent groups and speaks at Sabbath services sometimes—but is still planning to move to Oregon.

Lessons for ministry: 1) Once you are not dependent on a church organization for a paycheck, you are free to serve any brethren in any way you believe the Eternal wants. 2) Be definite in how you will serve brethren. If job duties or other things greatly limit your service, make a clean break and encourage members to

establish leadership in addition to your own.

Lessons for members: 1) A very gifted leader that is not strongly committed to a local group may be worse than a less-skilled leader or no leader at all. 2) Even if you do not agree on organization, do not lose your love for the brethren.

Info: John Davis, 219-267-7519.

Pastor Fired, Keeps on Serving Florida Congregations

Ron Smith was the UCG-AIA pastor in Miami and West Palm Beach Florida. These congregations had 40 and 120 people at their highest points. He knew that many in his congregation had suffered from heavy-handed leadership before, and was determined not to let it happen again. When he refused to promote the home office over the individual needs of the members, he fell into disfavor with the "home office." In November, 1996, a visiting minister discredited him in his congregation and the next day his termination letter was read to him over the phone (he never received a copy). However, he continued to attend UCG-AIA services and attempted to use the UCG-AIA "appeal process," but nothing was done for six months. When the home office discovered that Ron Smith had kept Passover at a different time than UCG-AIA prescribes, they told him he was being removed from the general conference of elders for violating the constitution. (Do the home office staff remove themselves when they violate the constitution?)

Ron Smith now earns a living from construction contracting, and serves a congregation of about 28. Sometimes he speaks, but they play a variety of tapes. They always have discussions and interactive Bible study. Most of them went to the Feast this year with Christian Educational Ministries. In August, the UCG-AIA assigned these two congregations to Richard Rand to pastor— now about 30 people in each. About 50 people have been "lost" from the area.

Lessons for ministry: 1) Same as previous story. 2) If you know that you are going to separate from Arcadia, do it quickly. Prolonged periods of disagreement just tend to scatter a group.

Lesson for members: Even former "hierarchical ministers" can learn to run services on a more Biblical basis.

Info: Ron Smith, 561-642-8953.

Pastor Resigns, Keeps Serving in Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania

In January of this year, Ron Weinland

sent a letter to the UCG-AIA elders showing how the home office staff was not attempting to run the organization by the constitution and bylaws, but was ignoring them or manipulating them on numerous occasions in order to run the organization the way they wanted to. We cannot list all of the difficulties, but the main one was \$3,000,000 that was supposed to be in reserves at the end of 1996, but had been spent. While there may have been good reasons to spend **some** of that money, the home office made no apparent effort to have the general conference of elders approve an updated budget (the constitution provides a way to "vote from home" without a big meeting). In almost any other corporation, leaders responsible for such overspending would probably be fired. Ron Weinland thought that something might be done at the Louisville conference but nothing was. He formally requested that the UCG-AIA Council of Elders ask the president and treasurer to step down, but he was ignored.

On May 26th, he wrote a resignation letter expressing these and other difficulties and sent it to his congregation. Most of the 70-member Toledo, Ohio congregation continues to meet with him (a few sought out other UCG-AIA congregations). About 35 members of the Detroit congregation meet with him every other week (60 remained in a UCG-AIA congregation now run by Randy DelAssandro). Ron also serves a 7-member group in Meadville, Penn. and about 25 in Cincinnati, Ohio. These congregations are able to financially support Ron Weinland, though at a lower level than the UCG-AIA. The format of services is still the traditional form. The brethren attended this past Feast with a variety of groups.

Lessons for ministry: 1) When you perceive difficulty, clearly state your case to everyone involved. Give them time to understand it, think about it and change their minds. But if they have thought about it and have not changed their minds, do not wait around hoping that they still might. Take action! 2) If you hope to be supported by an independent group, be prepared to work hard and accept what the Eternal provides for you.

Lesson for members: You may not agree with everything that a group is doing when it splits away. However, be patient and wait. Now, at least, there is someone locally who can hear you and make changes if you can show him from the scriptures. This is a vast improvement over sending a paper to a home office doctrinal team and waiting for numerous years for a

reply.

Info: Ron Weinland, 419-872-2444.

Small Charleston Group Thinks Big

The United Church of God, Southern West Virginia began before the UCG-AIA, with about 30 people. One of the members, Gary McClure, was anxious for the end of the lease of the 400-person-capacity room he owned as a part of his office space. He wanted to drop the lease with the WCG and begin it with the UCG-AIA. But before that could happen, they ran into trouble over the issue of governance. George Hampton made some proposals for changes to the local bylaws, and immediately was suspended from all congregational duties. Apparently, there was no room to discuss things. So 9 people decided to continue as an independent congregation—meeting in the 400-person facility.

But they are not letting the room go to waste. They are organizing special Sabbaths: inviting guest speakers and all of the Sabbath-keepers they know from surrounding states. Even some UCG-AIA brethren come. It is the only time they get to see some of their old friends. They are discussing public evangelism as well.

Lesson for everybody: Whatever gifts or capabilities you have, use them!

Info: George Hampton, 304-586-3070

Waco Group Gradually Separates

The Waco, Texas congregation was largely happy with their full-time pastor, Mark Gully, though a few complained to Arcadia about him because they felt he was not loyal enough to Arcadia. Several members of the congregation obtained assurance from UCG-AIA management that they would be consulted before any replacement was chosen. Several weeks later, with no consultation, the UCG-AIA announced that Don Hooser would become the new Waco pastor (adding it to his Dallas congregations) and Mark Gully would become unpaid (since he turned down an offer to transfer to El Paso).

Ben Mauldin, a local elder, proposed to the local board that they keep Mark Gully on as an unpaid pastor, thus saving UCG some expense. The Waco board agreed, and the congregation voted 38 to 18 to accept this proposal. The UCG-AIA refused to accept any of these proposals, so those interested in retaining Mark Gully began to hold services at a different time in the same building. The UCG-AIA removed Ben Mauldin's "eldership," but he is appealing that decision. One UCG-AIA administrator sent him a document

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daring actually considered other groups which were nearly 20 years old—like the Church of God, International or the Christian Biblical Church of God. But they also remembered the constant warnings they had heard from their WCG ministers: “These other groups were being led by men who were seeking power for themselves.” Also, joining one of these other groups usually meant leaving a congregation of 100 or more people and a local pastor to meet with a few other families and watch or listen to a taped sermon. Nevertheless, some people investigated another group, some investigated a few, and some tried to investigate them all. Some liked what they saw and joined, others did not.

When the United Church of God—An International Association (UCG-AIA) formed in 1995 at the Indianapolis conference, many people had great hope. Everyone hoped that they could continue preaching the doctrines that they had understood from the Bible for so many years. There was hope that many local congregations could continue somewhat intact. Ministers hoped that they could continue to have a job.

But once the bubble burst, there was hope for many other things. The “bubble” in this case was the idea that “God will correct whatever is wrong through leaders at the top.” If the Eternal allowed the WCG to go astray on major doctrines, was it also possible that He had allowed them to go astray on less significant doctrines? Was it possible that God had not always “backed up” unfair or unbiblical decisions of headquarters or the local ministry? Was it possible that the Eternal really wanted to put an end to the WCG-style hierarchy and to let his people use the **spiritual gifts** spoken of in the New Testament?

There was hope that the new UCG-AIA would not only right the immediate wrongs in the WCG, but also correct many of the problems from the past. The founding body asked for a **“home office”** that would **serve** the local congregations—**not** a **“headquarters”** that would **control** them.

During that year of 1995, over 400 “ordained ministers” and over 20,000 members left the WCG to be a part of

the UCG. Some even left other WCG split-off groups to be a part of this organization that appeared to be taking a less hierarchical approach to government. Many individuals sprang to action, moved by the Holy Spirit and their own initiative. Local evangelism, youth studies, tape ministries, the *Good News* magazine, *In Transition*, and other worthwhile things were started by individuals or small groups who had the ability and wanted to make the effort. Money came pouring into the new UCG headquarters. Members gladly gave to an organization that appeared to be really “doing something.”

Where is the Fruit?

But now, 2½ years later, what has the UCG-AIA done?

The UCG-AIA management went 3 million dollars over budget in 1996 and produced very little. The only major evangelistic effort has been several booklets, the *Good News* magazine and a few mass circulation ads promoting it. **Many UCG members are unaware that the *Good News* is not produced by the Arcadia home office**, but is still largely an effort of Scott Ashley and several other talented and dedicated brethren. The magazine could easily be continued without the home office.

However, the Arcadia home office has requested that numerous local evangelism programs cease—sometimes with the excuse that the home office could be sued if a local preacher said the wrong thing. (It is good that the Apostle Paul did not have a home office to shut him down—he was taken to court several times.) Other local evangelism has been shut down because the home office might not have enough money to buy the booklets required. (If local evangelism could make enough contacts to distribute all of the booklets that the home office could print, they would not need television or other more-expensive means of advertising booklets.)

But where is UCG-AIA television? After setting a goal to produce a television program by the end of 1996, and after spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on it (including salaries of full-time media employees), there has not been one radio or television program aired. This is a great contrast to

many other smaller Church of God split-off groups that were airing radio programs within three months of their formation. Some of these other groups went on to hire a couple of television employees, and within six months, were airing programs.

UCG-AIA elders have been quite frustrated by the apparent self-serving of the headquarters staff:

1. Even though it is the responsibility of UCG elders to vote in the governing council members of the organization, there is no organized way for them to determine what a council candidate stands for—candidates are given no significant time to speak or to write about what they hope to do as a council member. Some have excused this by saying that the elders should **not** “use human reason” in their voting, but merely pray for God to inspire their decision. But does the home office operate that way? When they need to hire someone or negotiate a purchase, do they only pray for the Eternal’s decision and then just pick whichever one seems good to them? Furthermore, if the purpose of the elders voting is not for them to use their own understanding based on the Bible, but simply to determine the Eternal’s will, why do they not simply cast lots for the council? That would be a much more reliable way to seek the Eternal’s opinion than trusting men not to “vote for their friends.”

2. Within the last few months, UCG-AIA elders have been told that they can be disciplined for saying anything negative about any of the corporate officers in email communications. Most of the instruction for selecting overseers in 1Tim 3 and Titus 1 are the avoidance of negative characteristics. How can they properly select men if they they are not allowed to share Biblical requirements about them? Have they forgotten that the UCG-AIA came into existence largely by WCG ministers communicating the obvious WCG problems via e-mail?

3. While the home office has gone substantially over budget, the paid elders have taken several different cuts in pay and benefits.

4. Full-time pastors have been required to move numerous times during their careers—taking their entire family away from friends and schools. The UCG-AIA elders agreed to move

their home office out of Southern California at their original Indianapolis meeting and specifically voted to move to Cincinnati during their 1997 conference. The Arcadia management tried to invalidate that vote and then gave various excuses why many years might be required to accomplish the move. To some, they still seem to be "dragging their feet." (See the box at right.)

Obviously, some good things have been accomplished by the UCG-AIA over these last 2½ years. But many are disappointed and, as our companion article shows, local congregations are breaking up or becoming independent. What has gone wrong? Is there anything brethren can do?

Some members and elders believe that **the present UCG-AIA management is largely at fault and needs to be replaced. We certainly cannot deny this.** We are continually amazed at how so many of the UCG-AIA publications read like trick advertisements. On the surface the language seems friendly and positive, but when examined carefully, it either says almost nothing or something quite different than what the casual reader might assume. We should not be shocked at this, however. Many of the current UCG-AIA management helped to cleverly implement the WCG's "new doctrines" during the early 1990's.

But before we blame everything on a few individuals, it is more important that we ask, **why is the Eternal letting this happen to individuals who are sincerely seeking Him?** It was hard for many people to depart from the WCG—**why didn't He give them good leaders in their next organization?** Why did He let "the spirit of Indianapolis die? **What does the Eternal want the UCG-AIA brethren to do? Does the Bible tell us?**

Why Did People Join UCG-AIA?

Before we try to answer these questions, we believe it is important to try to analyze the main reasons why people went to the UCG-AIA. From the many letters we receive and the many friends that we have in the organization, there seem to be four main reasons why people are attending:

1. Some want to attend "the one church where God is primarily working." They believe the Worldwide

Church of God was that organization, but that the mantle has now shifted to the UCG-AIA. They would like to see the other elders and brethren stop arguing and follow the existing leaders. Some in this group even believe that their salvation depends on being a member of this organization and following its leader(s).

2. Some believe that the Eternal may be working through multiple groups now, but also believe that the UCG-AIA is the best place for them to fellowship with brethren, help "feed the flock," and help preach the Gospel to the world. They largely believe that the UCG-AIA should continue using the Gospel-preaching methods traditionally used by the Worldwide Church of God. However, many people in this category believe that new management will be needed before they can become an effective organization.

3. Some attend the UCG-AIA, but believe major changes need to be made in governance. They agree with the elders having some control in running their home office, but do not understand why brethren have essentially no control over their local congregations. Desired changes also often include a more Biblically-based form of worship services and more local evangelism. Some are working hard to try to implement these changes either in their local congregation or in UCG-AIA as a whole. These are cooperating with category 2 members to work for new leadership. Some in this group believe that their local congregation must become independent in order to implement the needed changes.

4. Some attend the UCG-AIA primarily because they want to keep the Sabbath and fellowship with long-time friends and family. They would be happy to cooperate with home office governance or local governance, TV evangelism or local evangelism, or almost any other reasonable policies if the congregation could stay together. Some people have friends of 40 or more years; some have children that have married other members' children. Their "community" suffered when they left the Worldwide Church of God—they do not want to see it broken up further.

A Sure Way to Help the UCG-AIA move to Cincinnati.

Even though the General Conference voted to move the home office to Cincinnati, the UCG-AIA management seems reluctant to move. They have estimated the cost at \$350,000, but have only about \$100,000 in the budget (part of which has come from specially designated offerings sent by members). One local UCG-AIA congregation is working on a plan (to be announced) to reduce the cost of the move. Two other local UCG-AIA congregations are independently collecting pledges and funds to pay for the move:

United Church of God, Terre Haute
PO Box 476
Greencastle, IN 46135

United Church of God, Albuquerque
1031 Coors Rd NW Suite 1-2-713
Albuquerque, NM 87114

A pledge made to one of these congregations is a firm promise to contribute money for the move in the Spring of 1998 (provided a definite moving plan is in place). It gives everyone a much better way to estimate how much money will be available for the move without keeping it "tied up." Those wishing to contribute this year should do so directly to the Arcadia office, marking the item: "restricted for home-office relocation." (If you make a pledge and then later decide to send the money, please send it to the same address you made the pledge—otherwise, it will probably be counted twice.) Both of the above organizations can issue tax-deductible receipts for money actually received.

The pledge drive has just begun, and already over \$22,000 has been pledged.

An old man once said: "Church of God' members have always had a vote—their money. They could send it all to the fund or organization of their choice."

That man's son said, "If a Church executive can decide that God approves him spending His tithe on a first-class airline ticket, can a member decide that God approves him sending His tithe to help move an office to a place where it will cost much less to operate?"

—Norman S. Edwards

Some in this group are probably big-minded individuals thinking of the long-term future of their congregations; others are probably "socialites" who care little about church operation, but want to be with their family and friends. It is not our place to judge the motives of the individuals, but the effect of both is the same: their primary goal is to see the congregation stay together.

Exactly what percentage of the UCG-AIA membership in each category is uncertain. It probably changes a little every week. All of these points of view are understandable as there are scriptures to support each. Some scriptures warn us not to associate with those who teach false doctrine or are of a rebellious spirit—when people follow a single human leader, there is no rebellion and they can feel like they have little or no false doctrine because they all believe the same doctrinal statement that the leader approved. On the other hand, there are scriptures that tell us not to align ourselves with a single teacher and to practice only those doctrines that we personally understand. There are scriptures that tell us to tolerate those who are weak in the faith. In some ways, the issue seems to be a matter of "which scriptures do you emphasize the most?"

Each group can say "If everyone else were to see it my way, we would not have all of this division." That, however, is the fundamental problem of all human government. It would work so much better if everyone agreed. Now some will say that the answer to the problem is a strong hierarchy that will keep everyone together.

But the effectiveness of a strong central government depends greatly on the effectiveness of its leader. Herbert Armstrong was an obvious zealot. He worked hard for many years before he had a large organization, and was a very effective and prolific writer. Most of his followers believed that he had fruits to show that he was directly chosen by the Eternal. No large percentage of his followers questioned his right to lead his organization.

By contrast UCG-AIA leaders are clearly chosen by men—and seem to be chosen largely by "name recognition," not by spiritual fruit. Almost none of them have a strong reputation as dili-

gent students or committed evangelists. UCG-AIA's documents show that it is managed like a bureaucratic corporation. There are numerous opinions about who would make better leaders. Unpopular governments are always eventually replaced, abandoned, or overthrown. The less popular a government, the more quickly its demise.

There are no easy answers to these issues of governance. This is why we call this a lamentation for the UCG-AIA. Many people are trying to help make UCG-AIA a success, each in the way that they see best. But there seems to be no plan of government or specific leader that a majority are excited to support. Many are asking the Eternal to provide. **Praise him if He provides! Listen to Him if he does not!**

Doctrine, We've Only Just Begun

In addition to the controversy over governance, there are also many opinions on doctrine among the elders and members. Please see the related articles in this issue (pages 1, 3 and 18) on the subject of UCG doctrine. While the UCG-AIA does have many doctrinal principles stated in its constitution, and while it does have a doctrinal committee, brethren are by no means satisfied with doctrinal progress thus far. We have received many proposals from UCG-AIA brethren about how they would like to change the approach to determining doctrine. We summarize below:

1. Adopt the doctrines of the Worldwide Church of God as of December 1994. This plan was put forth at the original Indianapolis conference. It is a "comfortable" approach to take, however, because it neatly absolved the UCG-AIA pastors of any accusations that they did not leave the WCG soon enough over the issue of false doctrine. However, we believe that this approach is acceptable to only a few UCG members because they do not believe in the Trinity and other doctrines that the WCG was teaching at that time.

2. Adopt the doctrines of the Worldwide Church of God as of some other previous year. There are numerous groups that believe they have pinpointed the time when Herbert Armstrong "departed from the

truth," and they accept his doctrine as of that point in time. The UCG could easily pick out a year when HWA or the WCG departed from the truth and use it for their foundation of doctrine. However, we know of no consensus of which year UCG brethren would like to pick. Furthermore, Craig White's and many other's writings show that of those who do set a specific year where they accept WCG doctrine, still have a tendency to pick and choose a few doctrines from other years. This is particularly necessary in the area of prophetic doctrine, where former HWA prophecies simply have not come to pass.

3. Use the doctrinal committee to evaluate all of the old HWA and WCG doctrines in light of the Bible. This method is favored by many but could take a very long time, due to the many different doctrinal ideas that are now held by UCG-AIA members. In order to satisfy those with varying opinions, the doctrinal committee would have to document why they believe their view is right, and also why various other views are wrong. Not everyone will be happy.

4. Use the doctrinal committee to start a new study of Bible teaching from the beginning. While this seems to be the most scripturally sound, it would be hard for most brethren that are interested in continuing to practice the doctrines that they have believed for many years. This approach is likely to cause even more difficulty than the previous one. Doctrines inter-relate; often, it is not possible to clearly state one doctrinal opinion without referring to other doctrines. The process will take years and in the meantime, members and ministers will not know what they are supposed to believe.

5. Allow the UCG-AIA president to set the doctrines. This approach would work much faster than a committee approach, but there are probably only a few brethren who would support it. Most UCG-AIA brethren have very clear memories of being in an organization where one or two men changed doctrines that they were commanded to believe almost monthly. The current UCG-AIA management is known more for its technical administration than its teaching.

No-one is regarded as a great teacher of doctrine in the way that Herbert Armstrong was. Also, since UCG-AIA presidents are elected every few years, this approach would guarantee a doctrinal roller-coaster.

6. Continue to try to avoid the subject of doctrine. If one of the previous methods were made official UCG-AIA policy, a certain group of brethren would probably leave because of it. Avoiding any policy change would probably prevent a large group from leaving, but it will not stop the continual attrition caused by people leaving in frustration over the lack of a definite course. Craig White's article outlines the difficulties well: It is difficult for pastors to give in-depth "meaty" sermons if they continually run the risk of offending others regarding doctrine when beliefs are not clearly defined.

7. Decide on a minimal set of UCG-AIA "essential practices" with which nearly all members and elders can agree, then ask speakers to teach to the best of their ability from the scriptures, but ask that they not be dogmatic. A description of one possible set of essential practices is given in the article on page 25, but those who are in the UCG-AIA should be responsible for defining what they will do. Members who have long believed that they were in the "right Church" because it had nearly all the "right doctrines," will not like this approach—many will leave the UCG-AIA for more authoritarian doctrinal teaching. But this method will encourage brethren who are zealously studying their Bibles and desiring of teaching others to remain in the UCG-AIA. People, who really believe that the Holy Spirit works in our lives and teaches us, may begin attending the UCG-AIA simply to participate in this environment. **Some people have already adopted this approach personally**—they know that they are not in complete agreement with the UCG-AIA doctrinal statement or other members' beliefs, but they continue to fellowship there as long as no one asks them to leave.

Who Will Leave?

No matter which doctrinal approach

is adopted by UCG-AIA, some members will leave. This conclusion may seem overly pessimistic, especially to sincere brethren who are praying for unity. **However, we must be honest and say that the Eternal has not answered previous prayers for unity.** It is simply not possible to keep a church organization together when its members sincerely hold so many different opinions. We have no way of estimating how many UCG-AIA elders and members favor each of the above doctrinal approaches. Even a survey sent to all members might not yield meaningful results as many brethren have fairly fresh memories of being put out of the WCG for voicing honest disagreement.

We can learn a lesson from history. In the early 1970's, numerous pastors and members left the WCG for a variety of reasons over several years. Most hoped and tried to stay together. A group called the Associated Churches of God formed. However, some found the leadership in that group a little overbearing, so they decided to form the United Church of God (yes, the same name). But in the words of the president of that former-UCG, Dick Wiedenheft, "many of the ex-WCG groups broke up because the only thing that they all had in common is that they all wanted to leave the Worldwide Church of God." Some left because of bitterness; some left to gain more power to themselves; some left to teach distinctive doctrines so they could have a following for themselves. Others left over "church government" or so they could be free to study the Bible—even if it conflicted with headquarters doctrine. Still others left so they could use what they believed to be their spiritual gifts to help others and preach the Gospel. Some left because of WCG corruption or unfairness—either real or imagined.

What happened to the people who left the WCG in the early 1970's? Some completely disappeared from all Sabbath keeping groups. Some joined other previously existing Sabbath-keeping groups. The Associated Churches of God, now with no full-time employees, continues to this day. These continuing groups have been responsible for the teaching and baptizing of hundreds of individuals over the

last 25 years. Not all of them are "dead"! What was the single most important factor that made the difference between groups that continued to be effective and those that dissolved? Was it careful adherence to WCG-style governance and doctrine? No! **It was personal conviction of individuals to continue to live by the Bible and to teach it to others.**

We believe that if the UCG-AIA sets out on a quest to rebuild a WCG-like organization with "just the right collection of HWA doctrines," that it will fail. There will never be a firm consensus on this subject. Furthermore, we do not believe that a massive TV or publishing effort will unify the organization either. Even with millions of dollars, the UCG has been very slow to produce anything substantial. Without doctrinal agreement, how can they produce detailed literature in areas where doctrine is in debate?

However, we believe that if the UCG-AIA would emphasize doctrine less and focus more on members personally studying, growing and teaching at the local level, that the Eternal would prosper their work. Whether or not the existing UCG-AIA ministry is willing or capable of this massive change is another question. Most of the pastors and elders really believe that they want to do what is best for their congregations. Unfortunately, it appears that most long for the WCG-organization of years ago. That is all most of them know—they have spent most of their lives doing it.

But if we look at reality, many of these old "tried and true" methods no longer work. The idea that internal problems "can simply be ignored and no one will know" is still alive in the UCG-AIA, but independent publications and the Internet have turned "hushed problems" into common knowledge. The idea that "the ministry is nearly always right" in both judgment and doctrine is still alive, but it rarely works anymore. Years ago, many people stayed in the WCG in spite of major problems because they knew of no other alternative. Today, there are many alternatives.

It is not our place to judge which elders are knowingly self-serving and which ones are simply trying to make a faulty system work. But nearly every

UCG-AIA elder will be affected by the difficulties described in this article. **Unfortunately, the current home office management seems more interested in maintaining central control than in virtually anything else.** They appear little prepared to help pastors adjust to the changing conditions. Some UCG-AIA pastors have realized this and have or are implementing necessary local changes apart from the home office. Some implement changes as a UCG-AIA congregation, others have realized that they must separate completely from the UCG-AIA organization (see article on page 3).

What Does the Eternal Want?

The real question is where is the Eternal? What does He want the UCG-AIA to do? The four different governance plans and the seven different doctrinal approaches cannot all be His desire. Before we try to say what the Eternal wants for UCG members, we need to acknowledge that it could be a lot different than we might expect.

For those people who were members of the Worldwide Church of God fifteen years ago, how many of you would have believed someone who came to you and prophesied the future as it actually was to happen? Would you have believed that Herbert Armstrong would die and be replaced by men that would slowly and cleverly reverse many of the WCG's doctrinal positions? Would you have believed that most of the members would leave, and that there would be no single clear "successor organization"? I would have had a hard time believing it. Yet that is exactly what the Eternal allowed to happen.

While we are not claiming to predict the future, we must ask this question: **If the Eternal allowed the WCG to completely change course and fade into a shadow of its former self, will he allow the same thing to happen to organizations which largely seek to imitate the WCG?** This is a question that should not be ignored.

Many believe that a big organization is necessary in order to do a "big work." **But the New Testament clearly shows that the Gospel was originally preached without a centralized human organization.** Arguments about "who was the headquarters apos-

The Good, the Bad and the Silent

When congregations go through difficulties and split up, many friendships suffer. Here are **three true stories** of what can happen in these difficult situations.

I was talking to a friend who was a member in a large congregation who left the Worldwide Church of God in early 1995 for doctrinal reasons. This man did much of the accounting and other organizational work to help start this new independent congregation of several hundred people. The pastor told them that they would all discuss options for affiliation with a bigger group, but then one Sabbath, the Pastor announced that they were a Global Church of God (GCG) congregation. About 100 brethren took exception to this and other problems, and formed a new independent congregation. Again, my friend did much work to help form it. They asked the UCG-AIA to provide them a pastor and received certain promises of how the congregation would be run. Later, the UCG-AIA reneged on those promises, and so my friend, again worked to form another independent congregation. When I made a negative comment about the GCG pastor, he corrected me "No, Norm, we are still working hard to maintain friendships with all of these groups. I had lunch with [that pastor] just a few days ago. The members of Sabbath-keeping groups still get together for various activities and we want to keep it that way." My friend was right. **Even though he had worked hard and suffered much in the breakup of congregations, he was still trying and succeeding at maintaining friendships in all of the groups.**

An older separated lady, whom we will call Priscilla, stopped attending with the Worldwide Church of God in 1983 and the Church of God International in 1995. She attended only with a small independent group, but recently became a *Servants' News* subscriber and wrote about eight "scattered brethren contact postcards"—asking us to forward them to readers near her. She made several new friends from her effort, but one recipient, whom we will call Isabel, became very upset. Isabel called me and asked why we sent a postcard "from a single lady to her husband." After a minute of talking, we agreed that Priscilla's writing was **not** a romantic solicitation and that she had no way of knowing the gender of the people who would receive her cards. I said that if I received a card from a woman, I might give it to my wife and let her respond. Isabel informed me that her husband receives *Servants' News* "only to keep up with what is going on," and that the two of them were very involved in the United Church of God and that they did not have time or interest in corresponding with anyone in another group. Isabel was happy to know that we would avoid sending her family any more "Scattered Brethren letters." As far as we know, neither Isabel nor her husband made any effort to let Priscilla know about UCG services or activities. Priscilla had very little knowledge of the congregations in her area, and might have been interested. **Are these people the "light of the world" to which our Savior referred?**

This final story we have heard hundreds of times. The middle part varies, but the beginning and ending are always the same. A person or family attends a congregation for many years and establishes many friends. Then, they stop attending—maybe due to a minor doctrinal disagreement, an unjust disfellowshipment or some kind of personal problem. And they never hear from any of their close friends again. It is as if they had never attended all of those years. I remember doing this to my friends who left the WCG many years ago. I was afraid to talk to people in other groups because their "bad attitude" might rub off on me. In hind-sight, I now realize that I could not mentally deal with people who continued to have a relationship with the Eternal, whom I believed to be basically righteous, but did not belong to my organization. This destroyed my concept of the "one true church organization" and removed my comfortable feeling that we were special to God because we were members of the "right group." **The Bible gives two main reasons for avoiding others: flagrant personal sin and intentional doctrinal error. These are almost never an issue when brethren grow silent toward one another.** Remember what our Savior said: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). —NSE

tle?" are silly as the Bible never says that there was a "headquarters," "leading" or "Jerusalem" apostle. No New Testament writer ever refers to a handbook of church procedures or established Gospel-preaching methods. We find only one special Jerusalem conference—not an annual or even every-four-year event. We do not find them collecting money centrally to produce standard scrolls or books about Jesus; we do not find them hiring professional bands, horsemen, or heralds to attract attention. **All of these things were done by the Roman government and were well within the technology of the time.** We agree that much more centralization is possible today than in the first century, but we also see that **New Testament gospel preaching was decentralized by choice**—it was not near as centralized as possible at that time.

Acts 8:1,4 indicates that the early believers were scattered due to a persecution and went "everywhere preaching the word." **Has the Eternal scattered us so that we will teach what we know to others?** Does He want us to spend less time debating the fine points of doctrine and to concentrate on practicing and teaching what we already know?

Ask and You Shall Receive

How can each individual member know what the will of the Eternal is for him or her? Will He clearly show them, or must they rely on their headquarters or local ministry to tell them?

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him (1Jn 5:14-15).

We can be confident that the Eternal will answer us **if** we ask "according to His will." If we ask him to bless organizations or people that He does not want to bless, He will not do it. If we ask the Eternal to "make things like they used to be" when He does not want them that way, He will not do it. **We really need to look at ourselves and our lives and ask: are we asking for what is pleasing to us or what is pleasing to Him?**

...Yet you do not have because

you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures (Jms 4:2-3).

Most brethren have had experience asking the Eternal for forgiveness, better attitudes, blessings, healings, and that kind of thing. Most have received answers. But how does one ask the Eternal "what is best for my church organization?" or "where do you want me to attend?" We personally know of many people who believe the Eternal gave them answers to such complex questions—in a variety of ways. Some have personally set aside a time to fast and pray, after which they were confident that they knew what they should do. Others have asked the Eternal to send someone to show them what to do—and He did. Others have asked, "If I am supposed to do this, please perform this specific miracle"—and He has. A few others have received a startling dream or vision which they were able to understand. There are scriptural examples of all of the above. **The whole issue is: are we seeking His will or our will?** This is an issue between you and your Savior. If He clearly answers you, be prepared to obey—do not proclaim your answer to others unless He tells you to.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The same people who believe they have received answers to complex questions from the Eternal also report that there are times when He does not immediately answer their heart-felt requests. It is possible that our Savior may not show every UCG-AIA member a clear course of action over the next several months. It is very likely that the UCG-AIA will not demonstrate a clear course of action over the next several months.

Our Savior taught that others would identify His followers by their love for each other (John 13:34-35). He also told us to "live by every word of God," but he never said we would be identified by our doctrinal perfection. No matter what happens in the coming months, we will be blessed and we will be a blessing to others **if** we can maintain an attitude of love toward all of our brethren. There is no way that an individual, even a pastor, can guarantee that his congregation will stay together. No

matter what happens, these things will help:

1. Establish a strong relationship with the Eternal. Study the Bible and pray regularly. This should be the basis of your spiritual life, not your congregational attendance.

2. Do not cut off fellowship with others, even if you no longer regularly attend with each other. Make a special point to greet those from other groups when they visit your group. Try to visit other groups occasionally. Continue to invite those who attend other groups to potlucks, socials, outings, weddings, baby showers, etc.

3. Do not try to convince people to accept your views of doctrine, church government, etc. If they ask, be able to explain. If they want written literature, offer to get it for them (people are often afraid to request literature themselves from other groups). But if they are not interested in hearing your view, the more you talk, the more you alienate them.

4. If your friends become upset by your views or your choice of groups, do not give up on them. The feeling of "betrayal" wears off after a while, and temporarily estranged friends can become friends again.

5. Find ways to serve others. If you do not know how to do this, ask for some of the spiritual gifts in the New Testament (Rom 12:6-8; 1Cor 12:7-11,28-31; Eph 4:11-15; 1Pet 4:8-11).

Conclusion

We believe the difficulties in UCG—AIA are not solely due to some evil scheme plotted by ministers, members or outsiders. A different management more dedicated to service than control would certainly be a big improvement. Even with new management, difficulties due to diversity of doctrine and governance would still be monumental. We are convinced that most UCG-AIA brethren want to serve the Eternal. But, many are also far too dependent on their organization and human leaders—and not dependent enough on the Eternal. Unfortunately, most probably do not understand that yet. Hence, we lament the hard work and hope for the UCG-AIA that may never bear its intended fruit.

—Norman S. Edwards

"Position?" from page 1

What is the truth? What exactly are our doctrines? Are we closer to WCG than the old WCG under HWA? It is time for us to explore our own doctrines "lest history repeat itself". Did we form around the Sabbath and Holy

Days alone as some are now beginning to say? Personally, I have NEVER heard the UCG leadership state that, so why are some now saying that? We

formed around MANY other doctrines including born again in the resurrection, US & Britain in Prophecy, God is a Family and such like.

The lack of mention of HWA's name in print, the lack of sermons on MUCH of the details he taught, the lack of teaching in our publications of much of what he taught has led to many members forgetting the truths they once knew to the extent that they no longer consider them that important. This means that when we compare UCG sermons with that of the WCG, there is little difference (as related by visitors to the WCG). The lacklustre sermons and material, the lack of doing a Work, has meant that members are continuing to go elsewhere for spiritual food.

Now I must confess that while there is truth mixed with error in the sabbatarian community, there is also much fine material, especially that produced by GCG and CGI and others also have fine material. Let us not place a bar on our people reading fine and inspiring material, especially in areas where it may take us years to publish. Some conservative Protestant material has been published which are truly great, especially that by the reconstructionist and theologian school of thought such as The Institutes of Biblical Law by Rushdoony; Theonomy in Christian Ethics by Bahnsen; Jesus the Jewish Theologian by Young; Jesus Rabbi & Lord by Lindsey and the Jewish New Testament Commentary by Stern, etc. Fine and very useful works, backing up our doctrines and teachings (although I am not advocating that we rely on Protestant works).

At the end of this article is a com-

parison chart between the Radio Church of God's fundamentals of belief and the United Church of God's. Why the comparison? Because the Chairman of the Council of Elders, Bob Dick, announced that our fundamentals of belief are drawn from the Radio Church

of God's. Chairman of the UCG Council of Elders, Bob Dick, wrote the following in the 7 April 1997 New Beginnings:

"Not everyone is aware that our fundamental beliefs came directly from the fundamentals of belief drafted by Herbert W. Armstrong for the Radio Church of God, which in turn served as the fundamentals of belief for the Worldwide Church of God while he was alive. We took our fundamental beliefs directly from those approved by Mr. Armstrong for a very specific reason. One of our beliefs is that God calls a few out of this world in every age to become His Church (1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 3:1). We believe that God extended that calling to us, and that it was graciously given—unearned and unmerited (2 Timothy 1:9). We believe as a part of that calling that God granted deeper and fuller understanding of His way as we demonstrated a willingness to heed and obey...

"Something peculiar happened in late 1994 and early 1995 as trust in Church leadership was being destroyed. Many members began to study with a zeal they had not had for some time, or in some cases, ever. As they looked for material to study, the most common source was individual writers who had at some time in the past also been a part of our former affiliation. Their papers and booklets promoted a variety of opinions on assorted biblical issues from prophecy to Holy Day observance. Each writer taught doctrine as he saw it, encouraging readers to adopt a like belief.

"As I looked at this phenomenon, I could not help but ask myself a simple question. If I am determined

not to let a few leaders of my former Church take away my beliefs, why then would I fall into the other ditch and let a handful of individual authors establish for me new beliefs? One seems as unfounded to me as the other. The book of Proverbs gives wise advice when it exhorts us to be cautious of decisions reached with too little input (Proverbs 18:13, 17). Seeing the range of doctrinal opinions on a matter, and allowing them to, as it were, defend their positions against one another, can be quite sobering. This is why the United Church of God established a doctrinal review process for measured and methodical review of submitted material."

[Servants' News Comment: It seems Bob Dick has completely missed the point here. Sincere people want beliefs based on what they can understand from the Bible. They should not simply rely on old WCG doctrine, individual authors or UCG review processes. People were upset with the WCG because they were given the choice of either accepting beliefs that they could not prove from the Bible or leaving their friends of many years. When people realized that the old WCG doctrine of "God will always correct the leader at the top" failed, they began to question other old WCG doctrines as well as the "new doctrines". Individual authors had no power to "establish for them new beliefs," but people accepted new teachings because they appeared to be biblical and because the established organizations did not thoroughly cover the subjects.]

From the attached chart we might deduce certain things. For example, it is obvious that we have encapsulated the 'lost 10 tribes' doctrine in our belief system by tying Bob Dick's statement with a comparison of the UCG's and RCG's doctrines ("our fundamental beliefs came directly from the fundamentals of belief drafted by Herbert W. Armstrong for the Radio Church of God, which in turn served as the fundamentals of belief for the Worldwide Church of God while he was alive").

In the Preamble to the UCG's Fundamentals of Belief, we find the following interesting statement:

"The following are statements regarding the fundamental beliefs of the United Church of God, an International Association. This article is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of the beliefs of the Church. Questions about doctrine and belief will be addressed by a process adopted by the Council of Elders (Council) and approved by the General Conference of Elders (General Conference)." (emphasis mine)

In the June-July New Beginnings 1997 (Australian edition) it is stated that the Fundamentals of Belief is a "summary of current belief ... a synopsis of belief covered in this document" (page 8) (emphasis mine). Indeed it is a summary or overview designed to protect these precious truths in a legal sense in a world system where it is required.

Given the above, perhaps the UCG may now produce a separate doctrinal statements booklet. The booklet may be much more detailed and may I ask that it possibly state the following:

- that God raised up HWA to lead this branch of the Church of God,
- re-state the 18 truths (with a statement about our changed structural arrangements (i.e., truth No. 1)),
- refer to the Mystery of the Ages as a crystallisation of our beliefs,
- re-list the doctrines as stated in the constitution.

And finally to have a more detailed listing including subjects as: God IS a Family (not has a family); born again in the resurrection; the spirit in man; pagan origins of Easter, Christmas, New Year's, crosses, etc.; the US & Britain in Prophecy; the place of safety; the Ezekiel Warning Message; Divorce and remarriage; the race question; history of the Church of God; the Sabbath as a sign, etc. Interesting and inspiring sermons may then be based on this statement. These doctrines are held to by the majority of members and as such they need to be reassured that the UCG is holding on to them.

Here are just a few doctrines that are based on the Fundamentals of Belief, and are in our literature or have been presented in sermons, but are ignored in places:

Doctrine:	What UCG Believes/Teaches:
The US & Britain in Prophecy ('lost' 12 tribes of Israel)	There have been sermons on this all over the place, let alone by Mark Kaplan and Rick Sherrod. See also "What Lies Ahead for the British Monarchy and Commonwealth?" by Melvin Rhodes
Philadelphia Era (i.e., Church Eras)	See for eg "Wanted! The Spirit of Philadelphia" by John Meakin
Azazel goat is Satan, not Christ	God's Holy Day Plan, page 41
Pentecost is not on Sivan 6	Current UCG practice
The Sabbath is a Sign	"The Rest of the Story" by Larry Walker
Spirit in Man	What Happens After Death?, p. 18-19

Doctrine (continued):	What UCG Believes/Teaches:
Born-Again in the Resurrection	See the Fundamentals of Belief. Also, Christ was 'born' at His resurrection – "The Wave-Sheaf Offering" by Jerold Aust
Importance of the nature of God (some feel that it is not important)	It is of monumental importance: "Confessions of an Ex-Heretic" by Don Hooser; "Don't forget us!" by Roy Holladay
Food laws	"Why I keep the Sabbath, Holy Days, Tithing and Food Laws" by Mario Seiglie
God marks days from sunset to sunset (some think that the Sabbath is a very vague period of time)	"Don't forget us!" by Roy Holladay
Subordinist position of Christ to the Father	"Who is the Center of our worship?" by Mario Seiglie
Human Potential/Human Destiny	"God's Family" by Roger Foster

From the above we may safely assume three things:

1. We are continuing to teach in our written material the truth as it came via HWA.
2. People who are preaching contrary to the above should not be giving sermonettes and sermons. In fact if, for example, a person gives sermonettes which the membership knows is wrong, he should cease to do so. If the minister does not tell him to quit, then it can safely be assumed that the minister agrees with his position and probably has asked him to give such sermonettes. So much for upholding UCG beliefs.
3. Ministers should be preaching these truths and if not, congregations should be asking "why not, don't you believe in these truths?"

As we recall it: the compact that UCG had with the membership was to restore the truths that were taught by HWA to the Church, NOT a watered-down version of it; seek co-operation with other similar Churches of God; and reform Church governance (by incorporating accountability systems) to remove the 'lording it over' problem which has been severe over the years and to introduce greater fairness and utilising the gifts and talents of all members, not just a few.

To return to the thrust of this article, if UCG is to have an identity, it may be wise to examine whether the above 3 points are met and that all ministers are preaching on these matters. If they are not following the doctrinal aspect of the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*, then we are headed for real problems in the UCG which may see it gradually disintegrate. Note the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* which applies in principle, whether or not a minister has signed it.

The UCG *Ministerial Code of Ethics* states the following concerning doctrine (9 December 1996 New Beginnings):

In my preaching and teaching responsibilities I will give priority to adequate prayer, planning, and preparation so that my presentations will be biblically based, doctrinally sound and clearly communicated.

As a minister serving in the United Church of God, an International Association, I affirm my commitment to uphold:

The Fundamental Beliefs as stated in the Constitution of the United Church of God, an International Association;

The purpose, mission, goals and values of the Church;

The Constitution and Bylaws of the Church.

So then, what may one say if someone in UCG has a position somewhat closer to the WCG? For example, such a one might believe that the WCG was the Sardis Era under HWA.

One may answer it this way: Over the years in WCG, many of us have heard sermons on subjects such as "When is a thief not a thief?" The answer later in the sermon is when the thief starts giving, not when he stops stealing! In other words, he must replace the stealing with positive behaviour, otherwise a neutral position of not stealing or giving is not proactive and the person remains a thief at heart, if not in practice.

Similarly, when is a waterer-down not a waterer-down? When one only preaches on a few subjects but neglects much doctrine and portions of God's Word, and if many UCG doctrines as summarised in the Fundamentals of Belief are not preached and reinforced or upheld – what might one say? Such a one is not a waterer-down if and when one preaches the truth; he is still a waterer-down if he only preaches part of the Word of God and does not uphold the Fundamentals of Belief of the UCG by not preaching on those doctrines. Preaching neutral sermons is simply not good enough – most WCG congregations have them each week too. In some UCG congregations you have to ask yourself: "Well, what is the difference between us and the WCG?"

UCG members have observed that our sermons are often the same as WCG. So the only difference between us and them are statements of belief, not the sermons.

We need to hold on firmly to the truth without harassing people for minority beliefs. Conversely, we should not permit the minority to force their ideas on us, the majority. The problem is not having some differences within UCG. The problem is when the differences begin to mount up. If the pastor does not wish to preach on certain subjects, then arrange for others to do so. For instance, some denouncing the 'lost tribes of Israel' doctrine only causes division and offence – such a one should immediately be told that he may no longer hold an elected office in the Church and may no longer give sermonettes. Pastor Larry Walker had the following words of wisdom to offer on the subject:

"No one wants to recreate a repressive atmosphere where doctrine, policy or anything else is forced on the membership. But neither can we indiscriminately allow spiritual poison into our diet by feeding on material that seeks to attack, tear down and discredit" ("The Danger of Flashback", New Beginnings, 20 May 1996).

The UCG has actually decreased in size since the Cincinnati conference last year by about 2,500. Who is to blame?

Conclusions:

We have been losing members, in part, due to our not preaching many of these truths (US & Britain in Prophecy is but one example) and thus not fully feeding the flock. Secondly, we must ensure that the ministry is preaching these truths. If not, then perhaps they could publicly announce to the congregation why they do not believe them and open up to questions and answers in the spirit of UCG. It seems that after almost two years in existence in Australia, that they would be preaching these things.

Thirdly, there is nothing to prevent UCG ministers from preaching or teaching our UCG doctrines such as the US & Britain in prophecy, despite rumours to the contrary. For instance, it seems that we do not have to wait for a

booklet on a certain subject to be released prior to preaching on a subject.

Let me be clear: the issue is not about casting such a one out or harassing them. It is about continuing the beliefs that the UCG officially espouses.

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Chart Comparing United Church of God and Radio Church of God Fundamentals of Belief with Comments

Fundamentals of Belief, United Church of God	Fundamentals of Belief, Radio Church of God	Comments by White
<p>2.1.1 We believe in one God, the Father, eternally existing, who is a Spirit, a personal Being of supreme intelligence, knowledge, love, justice, power and authority. He, through Jesus Christ, is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. He is the Source of life and the One for whom human life exists. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who is the Word and has eternally existed. We believe that He is the Messiah, the Christ, the divine Son of the living God, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born in the human flesh of the virgin Mary. We believe that it is by Him that God created all things and that without Him was not anything made that was made. We believe in the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of God and of Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the power of God and the Spirit of life eternal.</p>	<p>1. We believe in ONE GOD, eternally existing in the heavens, who is a Spirit, a personal Being of supreme intelligence, knowledge, love, justice, power, and authority, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that in them is, and the source of life.</p> <p>2. We believe Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Christ, the divine Son of the living God, begotten of the Holy Spirit, born in the human flesh of the virgin Mary, and that He is true God and true man, that God created all things by Jesus Christ, and without Him was not anything made that was made.</p> <p>3. We believe in the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of God and of Christ Jesus; the power of God with which all things were created and made; that thru the Holy Spirit, God is everywhere present; that the Holy Spirit is divine Love, Faith, Understanding, Power, Joy and all the attributes of God — the Spirit of life eternal..</p>	<p>Here the binitarian belief is clearly sub-ordinist.</p>
<p>2.1.2 We believe that Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, is God's revelation, and His complete, expressed will to humanity. Scripture is inspired in thought and word, infallible in the original writings, is the supreme and final authority in faith and in life, and is the foundation of all truth.</p>	<p>4. We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are God's revelation and complete expressed will to man, inspired in thought and word, and infallible in the original writings; that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and in life, and the source of Truth. We believe all teachings contrary to the Holy Bible are false. We accept the Bible alone, and not the Bible and "something else."</p>	<p>— —</p>
<p>2.1.3 We believe that Satan is a spirit being who is the adversary of God and the children of God. Satan has been given dominion over the world for a specific period of time. Satan has deceived humanity into rejecting God and His law. Satan has ruled by deception with the aid of a host of demons who are rebellious angels, spirit beings, who followed Satan in his rebellion.</p>	<p>5. We believe Satan is a personality, a spirit being; and as the Devil is the adversary of God and the children of God; and that he now has dominion over the world which God allowed him for a definite "week" of seven thousand-year days — the first six of which are his six working days for his labor of deception, leading the children of Adam into rejection of God's law and therefore rebellion against God — the seventh thousand-year day of which will be the DAY OF THE LORD (the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God), during which Satan will be forced to rest from his work of deception while Christ rules the nations of the earth. Satan's power is merely to influence and lead, not to force men arbitrarily against their will. He has ruled by deception with the aid of a host of demons which are rebellious angels, spirit beings, who have followed Satan in his rebellion.</p>	<p>Why did the UCG Fundamentals not incorporate the 7 thousand year plan?</p>
<p>2.1.4 We believe that humanity was created in the image of God with the potential to become children of God, partakers of the divine nature. God formed humanity of flesh, which is material substance. Human beings live by the breath of life, are mortal, subject to corruption and decay, without eternal life, except as the gift of God under God's terms and conditions as expressed in the Bible. We believe that God placed before Adam and Eve the choice of eternal life through obedience to God, or death through sin. Adam and Eve</p>	<p>6. We believe man was created in the image of God, formed of flesh, which is material substance, living by the breath of life, and is wholly mortal, subject to corruption and decay, without possibility of eternal life inherent in himself, except as the gift of God under God's terms and conditions as expressed in the Bible; that God placed before the first man, Adam, his free choice of eternal life through obedience to God's commandments, or death through sin, that Adam sinned, thereby incurring the death penalty without having received eternal life, having yielded to the temptation of Satan, and that the sinful fleshly nature with its sensual desires and its pride passed on all men, so that all become sinners, thus bringing upon themselves the</p>	<p>— —</p>

United Church of God

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White

yielded to temptation and disobeyed God. As a result, sin entered the world, and through sin, death. Death now reigns over all humanity because all have sinned.

penalty, death.

2.1.5 We believe that sin is the transgression of the law. The law is spiritual, perfect, holy, just and good. The law defines God's love and is based upon the two great principles of love toward God and love toward neighbor, and is immutable and binding. The Ten Commandments are the ten points of God's law of love. We believe that breaking any one point of the law brings upon a person the penalty of sin. We believe that this fundamental spiritual law reveals the only way to true life and the only possible way of happiness, peace and joy. All unhappiness, misery, anguish and woe have come from transgressing God's law.

7. We believe sin is the transgression of the Law; that the Law is spiritual, perfect, holy, just, and good, summed up in the word "LOVE;" that it involves the two great principles of love to God, and love to neighbor, and that the Ten Commandments compose the ten points of that Law, and that the breaking of only one point makes one guilty of sin. We believe this fundamental spiritual Law reveals to us the only right and true way to life — the only possible way of happiness, peace and joy; that it has existed from Adam, is immutable and binding thru-out eternity; and that all unhappiness, misery, poverty, anguish, and woe has come from its transgression..

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2.1.6 We believe God so loved this world of helpless sinners that He gave His only begotten Son, who, though in all points tempted as we are, lived without sin in the human flesh. That Son, Jesus Christ, died as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. His life, because He is the Creator of all humanity, is of greater value than the sum total of all human life. His death is, therefore, sufficient to pay the penalty for every human being's sins. In paying this penalty He has made it possible, according to God's plan, for each person and humanity as a whole to have their sins forgiven and to be released from the death penalty.

8. We believe God so loved this world of helpless sinners that He GAVE His only begotten Son, who, though in all points tempted as we are, lived without sin in the human flesh, and died for us as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice thus making it legally possible for man's sins to be forgiven and for God to release him from their penalty, since Jesus, whose life was of greater value than the sum-total of all other human lives (because it was He who brought them into being) has thus paid the penalty in man's stead.

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2.1.7 We believe that the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead after His body lay three days and three nights in the grave, thus making immortality possible for mortal man. He thereafter ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

9. We believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead after His body reposed three days and three nights in the grave, thus making immortality possible for mortal man; that He thereafter ascended into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father, as our High Priest and Advocate.

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2.1.8 We believe that all who truly repent of their sins in full surrender and willing obedience to God, and who by faith accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, have their sins forgiven by an act of divine grace. Such individuals are justified, pardoned from the penalty of sin, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which literally abides within them and supplies the divine love that alone can fulfill the law and produce righteousness. They are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, which is the true Church of God. We believe in a true change in life and attitude. Only those who have the indwelling presence of and are being led by the Holy Spirit are Christ's.

10. We believe that all who truly repent of their sins in full surrender and willing obedience to God, accepting Jesus Christ as personal Saviour in faith believing, are forgiven their sins by an act of divine GRACE, justified, pardoned from the penalty of past sins, reconciled to God, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit which literally comes and abides within, supplying the divine LOVE which alone can fulfill the law and produce righteousness; and thus are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ which is the true CHURCH OF GOD. We believe in a true change in life and attitude and that only those who have the indwelling presence of, and are being led by the Holy Spirit are Christ's. Bible evidence of being thus baptized by the Spirit is the fruit of the Spirit in one's life. (See Matthew 7:20; Galatians 5:22-23). "Manifestations" regulated by I Corinthians 14.

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2.1.9 We believe in the ordinance of water baptism by immersion following repentance. Through the laying on of hands, with prayer, the believer receives the Holy Spirit and becomes a part of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ. 2.1.11 We believe in observing the New Testament Passover on the night of the 14th of Abib,

11. We believe in TWO ORDINANCES for this age; water baptism by immersion, into Jesus Christ (not a denomination) for the remission of sins, following genuine repentance; and the Lord's Supper as continuation of the Passover, observed at night on the anniversary of the death of our Saviour, the 14th of Abib.

N o t e :
Passover
is 14
Abib, not
15 Abib.

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the anniversary of the death of our Savior.

2.1.10 We believe that the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. On this day we are commanded to rest from our labors and worship God, following the teachings and example of Jesus, the apostles and the New Testament Church.

12. We believe that from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. On this day we must rest from our labors following the commands and example of the apostle Paul, the New Testament Church, and Jesus.

Why does this not state that it is sunset to sunset and that it is a sign?

2.1.12 We believe in the commanded observance of the seven annual Holy Days given to ancient Israel by God and kept by Jesus Christ, the apostles and the New Testament Church. These Holy Days reveal God's plan of salvation.

13. We believe the seven Annual Holy days as given to ancient Israel by God through Moses, kept by Christ, the Apostle Paul, and the New Testament Church, as evidenced by the books of Acts and Corinthians, are to be kept today. The sacrifices, which were added, are not to be kept on those days nor any other day of the year. During the spring festival of seven days, leavening in any form is not to be eaten, as Paul instructed the Corinthians.

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2.1.13 We believe that those meats that are designated "unclean" by God in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are not to be eaten.

14. We believe that certain foods called "unclean" are not to be eaten under any circumstances as they are harmful to body and health and also violate our bodies which are called the temple of the Holy Spirit of God.

More should have been made of the fact that these are health laws.

2.1.14 We believe that Christians are forbidden by the commandments of God from taking human life, directly or indirectly, and that bearing arms is contrary to this fundamental belief. Therefore, we believe that Christians should not voluntarily become engaged in military service. If they are involuntarily engaged in military service, we believe they should refuse conscientiously to bear arms and, to the extent possible, to refuse to come under military authority.

15. We believe that Christian disciples of Christ are forbidden by Him and the commandments of God to kill, or in any manner directly or indirectly to take human life; by whatsoever means; we believe that bearing arms is directly contrary to this fundamental doctrine of our belief; we therefore conscientiously refuse to bear arms or to come under the military authority.

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2.1.15 We believe in God's enduring righteousness. That righteousness is demonstrated by God's faithfulness in fulfilling all of the promises He made to the father of the faithful, Abraham. As promised, God multiplied Abraham's lineal descendants so that Abraham literally became the "father" of many nations. We believe that God, as promised, materially prospered Abraham's lineal descendants Isaac and Jacob (whose name He later changed to Israel). We believe that God, through Abraham's Seed, Jesus Christ, is making salvation available to all humanity regardless of their physical lineage. Salvation is not therefore a right of birth. It is freely open to all whom God calls, and those who are regarded as descendants of Abraham are those of the faith, heirs according to the promises. We believe that the knowledge that God has fulfilled and continues to fulfill the physical promises made to Abraham and his children, and is fulfilling the spiritual promise through Jesus Christ, is critical to understanding the message of the prophets and its application to the world in which we live.

16. We believe the PROMISES were made to Abraham and his "seed," Christ, and that the Covenants (including the New Covenant), and the promises pertain alone to ISRAEL. That our white, English-speaking peoples of today are enjoying the national phases of the promises — that of MATERIAL blessings — called the "Birthright," which was handed down thru the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, whose descendants we are; but that the "Scepter" — the promise of kings, and the SPIRITUAL phase of the promises, including Christ and salvation thru Him — was given to and shall not depart from Judah of whom are the race we know today as the Jews. We believe eternal life is God's gift resting upon the promises made to Abraham and his "seed," Christ, designating this earth (made new), not heaven, as our eternal home and reward. That salvation is thru Christ alone, and not inherited thru the Birthright (right of birth) and that salvation is freely open to Gentiles who, thru Christ, become Abraham's children and are adopted into the family of Israel and become heirs according to the promises.

It is obvious that the UCG has adopted the 'lost 10 tribes of Israel doctrine'.

2.1.16 We believe God's purpose for mankind is to prepare those whom He calls, and who elect through a life of overcoming sin, developing right-

17. We believe God's purpose is the creation of high spiritual character, and therefore the very object of redemption is to rescue mankind from SIN (transgress-

Clearly the teaching is that the UCG

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eous character, and growing in grace and knowledge, to possess the Kingdom and to become kings and priests reigning with Christ on this earth after His return. We believe that the reason for mankind's existence is literally to be born as spirit beings into the family of God.

2.1.17 We believe that the Church is that body of believers who have received, and are being led by, the Holy Spirit. The true Church of God is a spiritual organism. Its biblical name is "The Church of God." We believe that the mission of the Church is to preach the gospel (good news) of the coming Kingdom of God to all nations as a witness, and to help reconcile to God such people as are now being called. We believe that it is also the mission of the Church of God to strengthen, edify and nurture the children of God in the love and admonition of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2.1.18 We believe in tithing as a way of honoring God with our substance and as a means of serving Him in the preaching of the gospel, the care of the Church, attending the festivals and helping the needy.

2.1.19 We believe that the only hope of eternal life for mortal humans lies in the resurrection through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We believe that at the return of Jesus Christ a resurrection to spirit life will take place for all who have been God's faithful servants. We believe that after Jesus Christ has ruled on this earth for 1,000 years, there will be a resurrection to physical life of the vast majority of all people who have ever lived. We believe that after these people have had an opportunity to live a physical life, if they become converted, they too will receive eternal life. We also believe that those who reject God's offer of salvation will reap eternal death.

2.1.20 We believe in the personal, visible, premillennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ to rule the nations on earth as King of kings and to continue His priestly office as Lord of lords. At that time, He will sit upon the throne of David. During His thousand-year reign upon the earth, He will restore all things and establish the Kingdom of God forever.

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ing the fundamental spiritual law), and its resulting degradation, misery and unhappiness; and that the object of the present dispensation is to fit those whom God now calls, with their consent, thru a life of trial and test and overcoming sin, growing in grace and knowledge to possess the KINGDOM and to become kings and priests reigning with Christ after His return. We believe Christians must therefore live a clean, pure, holy life by faith according to the Bible standard, with constant Bible study and surrendered prayer, trusting God in and for all things, that yielding to pride and lust of the flesh is sin, that God hears and literally answers the believing prayers of His children who keep His commandments—according as He has promised in His Word, including physical healing, deliverance from temptation and trouble, providing the way for every actual need.

18. We believe the Church is merely that body of believers who have, and are being led by the Holy Spirit; that the true Church of God is not a denomination; that the inspired name for this spiritual organism is "THE CHURCH OF GOD;" that the Bible name for each local assembly is "THE CHURCH OF GOD," and, considered collectively, "The Churches of God;" that the mission of the Church in this time is to preach the Gospel (Good News) of the coming KINGDOM OF GOD, (with special stress on the warning to America and Britain of the prophecies pertaining to them), into all nations as a witness, reaching the vast multitudes with power and conviction; to reconcile to God, and to save, thru Christ, such people as are now called; and to minister to the Church of God, strengthening and edifying the brethren in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

19. We believe the only hope of eternal life for mortal man lies in the resurrection; thru the indwelling (now) of the Holy Spirit; and that there shall be a bodily resurrection of the just and unjust — the just to eternal life as spirit beings upon earth, the unjust to receive the second and final death in hell (Gehenna) fire in which they shall perish in eternal punishment..

20. We believe in the personal, visible, premillennial, imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ to rule the nations of earth as King of Kings, and to continue His priestly office as Lord of Lords; that at that time He will sit upon the throne of David restoring all things during a thousand year reign upon earth and establish the KINGDOM OF GOD upon earth forever.

White

believes that the new birth occurs at the resurrection and that God is a Family.

The UCG statements should include reference to the Ezekiel Watchman Warning Message (see Ezek 33:6)

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The Insoluble Dilemma of The UCG—AIA

Written by a concerned and active UCG-AIA member

In the spring of 1995, several hundred ministers resigned from the WCG and, along with their spouses, went to Indianapolis. There they formed The United Church of God—An International Association. The method used to form UCG-AIA was called “spiritual consensus” which is a fancy name for voting.

By vote of the assembled congregation in Indianapolis, it was determined who would have administrative authority over them. (The Council of Elders) By vote that assembled congregation approved the basic faith they had in common. (The Statements of Belief) By vote that assembled congregation determined that a yearly General Assembly of Elders would be convened where any and all ministry who wished to attend would vote on doctrine, budget, and other issues—the relocation of the home office for instance—affecting the organization’s functioning.

Since Indianapolis, The Council of Elders has seen fit to hold its deliberations all over the United States and has urged and encouraged the ministry in each region to observe these proceedings, ask questions, and give input. Since Indianapolis, an “elders forum” has been established on the internet to give those in the ministry a forum to hold forth in open and lively discussions on issues that concern them.

Nobody in the UCG-AIA to date has declared this process of “spiritual consensus”, this “multitude of counsel”, this “system of voting”, illegitimate, non-biblical, ungodly, or wrong. Yet when the assembled congregation in Indianapolis (and all who have since accepted positions as ministers in UCG-AIA) returned to their flocks, they promptly forgot everything they learned in Indianapolis about “spiritual consensus”, “multitude of counsel” and “voting”. **Many ministers demanded openness, access, and accountability for those people governing them, but they are now in the process of denying these things to their flocks.**

The Waco, Texas congregation asked that their input be considered in any decision about who would pastor

their congregation. They took a vote and gave their counsel, but that counsel was ignored. Now, that congregation

is split. **What would be the reaction of the UCG-AIA ministry if the home office or counsel of elders ignored their vote?** [When the home office tried to invalidate the ministry’s vote to move to Cincinnati, they received a multitude of complaints and threats of resignation from the voting ministry. —SN Editor]

The Kansas City, Missouri congregation was told by their pastor that if he couldn’t overrule any decision their local board might make, then he could not be their pastor. This ultimatum is rich in irony since that board predated the formation of UCG-AIA by several months and that particular pastor was assigned to go to Kansas City by UCG-AIA at the invitation of the board he now sought to dissolve. Now that congregation is split. **Would the ministry tolerate such an ultimatum to dissolve their general assembly by the council of elders and home office?**

In the Minneapolis, Minnesota congregation, the issue was speaking out about possibilities for local congregational involvement in the public proclamation of the gospel. They were told by their pastor to shut up or get gone. Now that congregation is split. Would the ministry tolerate their internet elders forum being similarly muzzled?

This is the insoluble dilemma of the collective ministry of UCG-AIA: If the ministry continues to insist on a voice in their destiny, but deny a voice to their members, how are they any more credible than the scribes and Pharisees of Christ’s day? **If the ministry believes that God wants an authoritarian government like the WCG, then why did they rebel against the WCG in the first place?** (This question is equally valid for all of the other authoritarian spin-offs from the WCG.)

Of course there is a more sane and Biblically correct alternative. That alternative is to admit (as most Christian’s experience shows) that just as God is still opening our minds to greater understanding about doctrine and prophecy, he is still revealing greater understanding about how his people can and should organize themselves to accom-

plish the work of the Church.

This alternative approach would admit (as scripture teaches) that **God’s spiritual gifts of helps, discernment and leadership are not the exclusive property of the ministry**, but are freely given to all the brethren through the Holy Spirit as it pleases God.

This alternative approach would admit (as the history of the Church of God teaches) that anything not expressly prohibited by God’s word is worthy of consideration, and then evaluation on the basis of its fruits over time.

This alternative approach would understand (as did Herbert W. Armstrong) that things, (like card playing, dancing, and going to the theater) are morally neutral and that their misuse is what makes them a sin. Just because Mr. Armstrong had a blind spot concerning such things as make up and voting does not make that principle any less valid.

To date, the response from too many of the ministry has been to tell their flocks the same thing they were told by the WCG not quite three years ago: “My way or the highway”, “sit down and shut up—or get gone”, and “go ahead and give your counsel, but we are going to do what we please anyway.” Usually, those in administrative authority over the ministry do little to discourage this treatment of the members. **This approach is not consistent with “valuing each other as members of a Godly community.”**

If such attitudes and **blatant hypocrisy** continue in the UCG-AIA, there will be more congregations like those in Kansas City, Waco, and Minneapolis, and others that keep splitting and breaking away. Not because of any Biblically refutable heresy, but because they have been told that their spiritual gifts don’t matter, their counsel is not important, and their duty is to pray, pay, and stay—preferably out of the way—in some obscure corner. Is causing such divisions the work of the Church of God’s ministry?

To the voting ministry and the elected administration of UCG-AIA it should be said, (with apology to the Apostle Paul for plagiarism—see Gal. 2:11-14) “If you, having been under autocratic and authoritarian bondage have chosen a different way to conduct yourselves as Christians, **why do you compel your flocks to live under what you have rejected, why do you deny them the choice that you have chosen?**” 

Most people believe that an “ordained ministry” is an utterly essential part of any church or religious work. They will give far more credence to a message given by an “ordained” person than they will to a message given by a “lay member.”

Most people have a very specific concept of what it means to be “ordained.” They **believe** that a “lay member” goes through a ceremony which includes the laying on of hands, and he is “set apart” by the Eternal to perform specific functions that “lay members” cannot perform: usually marriages, funerals, baptisms, counselings, anointings for healing, receiving tithes or offerings, public evangelism, and the ordination of other ministers. Most people believe that an ordained person maintains this status his entire life, unless it is revoked by his “church organization.” (However, if an elder quits his church organization before they revoke his “ordination,” then he gets to stay ordained and start or join another organization.)

But have you ever heard a sermon that demonstrated this concept from the Bible? Have you ever seen it explained from the Bible in an article or a doctrinal statement? Probably not. Because the process described above is not in the Bible. We will guarantee you that you have never heard or read an explanation of “ordination” using the meanings of the words in the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures! Why? Because there is **no** Hebrew or Greek word in the Bible that has the meaning described above.

Are we saying that the Bible does not teach that the church is divided into “ordained men” (“clergy”) and “lay members”?

The terms “lay member” (which means “low member”) and “clergy” never appear in any of numerous Bibles that we have searched. Nor could we find any equivalent words in English, Hebrew or Greek translations.

The word “ordain” (and its variants “ordains,” “ordained,” etc.) appears in every Bible that we searched, but the number of times varies greatly. It appears 43 times in the King James Version, but only 3 times in *Young’s Literal Translation*. We found no consistency at all in the number of times it appears in many other translations. What is going on here? Why are the translations so different?

The King James Bible translators simply wrote the word “ordain” into verses where it does not belong. Later Bible translators continued to use it in **some** of the traditional verses, but decided to correct some of the most flagrant mistranslations of the KJV.

But you do not have to know Greek or Hebrew to prove this to yourself! You do not have to take our word for it, either!

All you need is three concordances or a “computer Bible” that will search on Strong’s numbers (nearly all of them do). Here is how you do it. *Young’s Analytical Concordance* will show you the 13 **different** Hebrew words and the 13 **different** Greek words that are occasionally translated “ordain”, “ordained”, etc. in the King James Bible. **Every one of those Hebrew and Greek words has a different meaning, to which it is more commonly translated.** In other words, there is no word in either Hebrew or Greek that has the traditional meaning of “ordain.” *The Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament* and *The Englishman’s Greek Concordance of the New Testament* can be used to verify this. Simply look up each of the 26 words from *Young’s Analytical Concordance* in the Hebrew and Greek concordances, and you will see that all of the words have a meaning that is **not** a religious ceremony. A computer Bible program that will search on the Strong’s numbers for each of the 26 words will work just as well.

How could Bible translators allow us to be misled on such an important doctrine? King James ordered his translators to retain traditional church terminology in the KJV. King James was head of the Church of England—which had split off from the Catholic church only 70 years before, and was still very similar in structure and doctrine. Most Bible translators since that time were members of churches that had a doctrine of ordination. Translating a Bible without this word would probably mean that both the Bible translation and its translators would be rejected by nearly all churches.

Young’s Literal Translation is the best Bible translation for this subject as far as I know. As expected, it is not well accepted by most churches. The word “ordain” and its variants appear only 3

Do Congregations Need **Ordained** Ministers?

times in the entire YLT Bible (Acts 10:42; 17:26,31). It is always translated from the Greek *horizo* and is used in the sense of something “determined by the Eternal.” The Greek *horizo* is elsewhere translated “determined” and could have logically been translated that way in the three “ordain” verses. If Young’s would have used “determine” in these three verses, we would have a very legitimate English Bible translation that does not contain the word “ordain” at all!

The concept of “ordained men” (“clergy”) and “lay members” does not originate from the scriptures, but from the Catholic Church. Another related idea is that the New Testament ministry were the special class of people who replaced the Old Testament priests (indeed, the Catholic ministry are called “priests”). The Bible never teaches this idea. **Rather, it teaches that all believers are a “priesthood”** (1Pet 2:5,9). Nevertheless, this “ordained men” and “lay member” class concept was carried from the Catholic Church through the various Protestant Churches and eventually infiltrated many of the Sabbatarian churches. **Is it in your church?**

The traditional “ordained men” vs. “laymen” idea gives nearly all of the Biblical spiritual gifts to the “ordained men,” and none to the “laymen.” If we can remove this false concept from our minds, then we can begin to see the various spiritual gifts and functions that the Bible describes and see that they are placed in His Body, as He desires.

The Bible speaks of “elders” and “overseers” having responsibilities in congregations and it gives qualifications for selecting them. It shows that some are selected directly by the Eternal and some are selected after the prayers and counsel of men. People selected to serve brethren should be chosen by the brethren whom they are to serve (Acts 6). The Bible teaches the laying on of hands and prayer for people who are given certain responsibilities. But responsibilities tend to be specific. Even if we forget about the term “ordain,” the Bible never defines a

process whereby a certain believer becomes a "new class" of person and is suddenly qualified to perform a host of spiritual functions. **The Bible contains no list of functions that only certain people can do.** It does show that people ought to be mature and not seek responsibility for which they are not prepared.

There are no examples of our Savior's followers citing the day or the man who "laid hands on them" as credentials for their preaching or work. Yet when this writer attended the founding conference of one church organization, full participation was limited to "ordained men." They seemed totally unconcerned that many of the men at the conference were "ordained" by a man who they then realized may have never been "fit for the ministry." The spiritual fruit of the individuals present was not considered. To participate fully in the conference, people had to give their ordination date. This is not Biblical.

We must ask: is the Eternal allowed to grant spiritual gifts without human "ordination"? Abraham's servant asked for a miracle to show him who to select for Isaac's wife, yet the Bible does not record his name or any other deeds. Gideon was a man who did not have great faith, but asked for two miracles and received them. Philip was commissioned by men to help serve widows in Acts 6, but in Acts 8 he preached and performed miracles in Samaria, then was given direct instruction by the Holy spirit to teach and baptize an Ethiopian eunuch, then was miraculously transported to Azotus—where he preached in ALL the cities up the coastline to Caesarea (about 70 miles away). **Philip carried out a major evangelistic campaign even though the apostles only laid hands upon him for the service of waiting on tables!** We can find numerous other biblical examples of men who served in great capacities, with no Biblical record of their "spiritual qualifications". Does the Eternal still work this way?

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:12-13).

James wrote to carnal-minded

brethren who were warring among themselves. Do his words apply equally well to the "warring" that is going on among church organizations?

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder [disfellowship] and covet [other's tithes and members] and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures (Jms 4:1-3).

James clearly says that we do not receive because we are asking for the wrong things. How many organizations tell their membership to pray for their "ordained ministry" and for more money to be sent in so they can preach the Gospel? Should not we pray for the Eternal to raise up people and to do His work through them? Will we be ready to receive the people He sends?

We are not saying that all "ordained ministers" are bad men. We have personal experience with some good men. Some "ordained" men were probably also chosen by the Eternal; others may not have been chosen by the Eternal, but He blessed their work because they diligently sought Him. **But much harm has happened to people who trusted in the words of men whom they thought were speaking for the Eternal because they claimed to be "ordained."** Would the Eternal allow great harm to be done by those who claim to be "ordained to his service"? Yes! The following prophecies are about the Eternal's flock and its shepherds. While these also apply to physical Israel, we cannot escape their meaning for the church today:

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: "as I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock"—therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the

shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them." For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country (Ezk 34:7-13).

"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings," says the LORD. "But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. **I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more,** nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says the LORD (Jer 23:1-4).

The need in our congregations today is for brethren to seek the Eternal and ask Him to provide them shepherds. We need to use the gift of the Holy Spirit to teach us individually. We need to realize that we have trusted too much in church organizations and "ordained ministers"—neither of which is found in the Bible. While the Eternal has worked through people in the past in spite of these errors, can we expect Him to do a big work through us in the future if we perpetuate these errors—especially when we know better?

Do not fear that congregations will be in confusion without an "ordained ministry." The Scriptures have **much** to say on how a local congregation should be run, but we do not have room in this brief article. For more information, please write for our articles *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans* and *Assembling on the Sabbath*.

—Norman S. Edwards

A Lesson About “Ordination” from the Worldwide Church of God

Herbert Armstrong, the Worldwide Church of God Founder, preached, wrote articles, conducted funerals, and baptized before he was “ordained.” His entire congregation laid hands on him **after** he proved his service to them over a period of time—he was not the product of a ministerial decision. This congregation’s action was closer to the Bible example, though they apparently did believe that this single action “authorized” him to perform all of the typical “ordained functions.” **But as the years went by, the practice of ordination in the Worldwide Church of God grew more like that of the Catholic Church.** Armstrong’s leading ministers would often not ask anyone in a local congregation before ordaining a person there—even the person ordained was seldom told until the ceremony began. There was usually no formal attempt to determine if the man met any of the qualifications mentioned in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Roderick Meredith, head of the WCG ministry for many years, told me personally that the main criteria for ordination over the years was “would this person follow the Government of God?” (which means the church organization).

I know of other specific cases where men were ordained because “a local group needed someone to keep it together” or because they were big contributors and headquarters thought ordination would keep them in their organization.

Some may say that these are abuses of the otherwise correct ordination process. **But if we admit that the Eternal allows men to abuse the “ordination” process, then we are admitting that the Eternal does not approve every ordination by church organizations.** As the WCG introduced one new doctrine after another, can anyone say that the percentage of ordained men who remained faithful to the scriptures was any higher than the percentage of members who remained faithful? Today, men who trace their “ordination” back to Herbert Armstrong can be found teaching nearly every imaginable doctrine and involved in nearly every imaginable sin. **The reality is and always has been:** Each individual member is left to examine the doctrines and the fruits of each “ordained” man and make his or her own decision about how they will regard each “ordained” man. —NSE

Princess Diana: Why Did It Happen?

Princess Diana died in Paris from injuries suffered in an automobile crash in the early morning hours of August 31, 1997. According to French police reports, Henri Paul, the driver of the vehicle was driving about 120 mph through a tunnel. He was trying to evade photographers on motorcycles who were attempting to get pictures of Diana. He was probably drunk. Diana’s companion, Dodi Fayed, and Paul were killed in the crash. Princess Diana died in the hospital shortly afterward. A security guard, the only one in the vehicle wearing a seat belt, survived.

Is this a judgment of God on a “bad princess” or on an “evil nation”?

We need to consider the words of our Savior in regard to similar situations:

There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:1-5).

Placing The Blame

Who was at fault in the incidents that our Savior mentioned?

Obviously, Pilate and his soldiers were responsible for directly killing those Galileans. However, those Galileans also must have known that their sacrificing independently from the established Jewish religion accepted by the Romans made them look like an independent group that might attempt to overthrow the Romans.

In the second example, we have to ask: Who owned the tower? Who was in charge of its maintenance? Most structures that collapse exhibit obvious physical symptoms—but since they may not collapse right away, people often get used to the symptoms and no longer concern themselves. In both of these cases, it was probably possible for the individuals involved to foresee the evil and avoid it (Prv 27:12).

In summary, we see a variety of sins that caused the above disasters. There are sins of commission: sending soldiers to kill and soldiers killing; there are sins of omission: failing to properly maintain a tower and failing to warn others when it is unsafe; and there are sins of failing to look out for one’s own safety and going along with the crowd. We do not know how many people there were in the above examples that knew that Pilate would send soldiers after the Galilean group or that knew the tower was in danger of collapse. Maybe some people did—maybe they could have warned others.

In the case of Princess Diana’s death, there were plenty of sins on the part of many. A number of individuals and groups of individuals had a chance to prevent that death but did not. The driver should have refused to drive in his drunken state—even though he may have lost his job because of it. The people who hired and dispatched the driver could have been more diligent to be sure that he was fit for the job that night. The three passengers in the car could have fastened their seatbelts. They could have sensed his drunkenness and refused to ride with him, in spite of their compelling desire to get on with the evenings activities. The photographers should have valued the life of the Princess more than their pictures and should not have chased the vehicle at unsafe speeds.

Publishers should refuse to publish pictures of personal events that are obtained in an illegal or dangerous manner. And everyone should refuse to buy magazines that make merchandise of the private lives of individuals. Did you have a little part in princess Diana's death?

Unfortunately, the typical government reaction to accidents such as this one is to propose more traffic laws or laws requiring more safety equipment in vehicles. But in this case, the vehicle was an armored Mercedes-Benz, far safer than most people can afford. The driver and the photographers knew the traffic laws—and were probably quite willing to pay any fines they might have incurred breaking them. The problem stemmed from the people involved—there were too many who were willing to sin.

Time and Chance

The point of our Savior's message is that if we do not repent—if we do not change to live His way of life—we also will die a meaningless death—maybe early, maybe late in our life. The Bible indicates that the righteous will suffer persecution in this life (Matt 5:10, Mark 10:30, Heb 11:35), but they will understand the reason for it—knowing that it will be for ultimate good.

We can be fairly sure Diana was not concentrating on what God expected of her that night—she was far more interested in a nice meal and evening away from photographers. The Eternal is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).

Nearly everyday, people die in high-speed automobile crashes—most are young, and far too many are drunk. Why does this continue? Because for every person who dies in a crash, there are hundreds more who drive too fast but survive unscathed.

This was not the first time Diana was driven at high speed. As people grow to trust a faulty tower that is still standing, so they learn to trust high speed drivers, as long as they are not involved in a crash.

As our Savior pointed out, it is not always the worst sinners who die in such disasters. Some people who die in such disasters are apparently "good people," while others have a long history of criminal activity. Princess Diana died the same way that so many "common people" die. She did not have any divine protection—if she did, she would still be alive. On the other hand, her death does not prove that she was particularly worse than anyone else.

There is no doubt that Diana had her sins, but they seem no worse than the rest of the royal house. She had her extramarital affairs, but so did her ex-husband Charles and much of the rest of the royal family. One of the biggest complaints about her was her lack of formality—that she would not follow all of the formalities expected of a princess, that she regularly mixed with "commoners," that she did not insist that others bow or curtsy to her. Most people do give her credit for using her fame to draw attention to and raise money for a number of charitable purposes. She was by far more successful at this than any other member of the royal house today. While this writer cannot endorse every one of the causes which she supported, it is obvious that she was trying to use her position to better the life of others—not simply to enjoy herself.

Biblical View of Kings

What does the Bible say about kings and rulers? Does it place emphasis on the way people should respect the rulers, or on what the rulers should do for the people?

The first thing we must learn from the Bible is that we should not even have a king or queen! God would rather rule over us directly (1Sam 8). But if people insist on having a king, He will still work with them as long as they continue to obey Him (1Sam 12). King Solomon certainly reached the height of pomp, ceremony, and splendor (1Kng 10, 2Chr 9). When the Queen of Sheba visited, she was impressed beyond measure. But the Eternal was not impressed. He was more concerned that Solomon had disobeyed His specific commandments to kings (1Kng 11). It was only because of David's faithfulness that the kingdom remained intact during Solomon's reign (1Kng 11:12). In the five books of Moses, there are only seven verses that give specific instruction to a king, and Solomon terribly violated them:

When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, "I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me," you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, "You shall not return that way

again." Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel (Deut 17:14-20).

Solomon had many horses, he had many wives, he returned to religions of Egypt, he had much silver and gold for himself by taxing the people, his heart became lifted up above his brethren, and he turned aside from the commandment of the Eternal. There is no record that he ever wrote a copy of the law or read from it every day (whereas David did—Psalm 119:97).

Even to this day, many people think that because of the difficulty and pressure of their job, it is acceptable for "royalty" to live a luxurious life at the expense of the people and to commit fornication, adultery and other sins that would be unacceptable for "common people." The Eternal makes no such provision! Rather, our Savior gave this instruction to his disciples:

The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called "benefactors." But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves (Luke 22:25-26).

The British Royalty

Most "royalty" today has incredible focus on "titles" and "respect". The Eternal clearly places the focus on service and righteousness—both in dealings of state, and in personal righteousness. When our Savior walked the Earth, he never established any procedures, pomp, or titles for addressing either Himself or his followers. The instructions for choosing leaders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are mostly about finding people who are righteous in their personal lives. The Eternal gives no special honor to a ruler

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Non-revelation 2 & 3: for Those Who Believe in Hierarchical Government

Read First: In the book of Revelation, chapter 1, verse 11, the Apostle John was told to write his Vision and send it to seven literal churches in Asia. While the entire book is prophetic, the messages to churches in Revelation 2 & 3 must have also accurately described the conditions in those seven churches at that time. Each message was sent to a congregation in a specific city which John would have known. If the messages were **only prophecies** for the distant future, would our Savior use current church names? No, but He told John to actually send the messages to churches.

How does hierarchical or “top down” church government fit into Revelation 2 & 3? **Where is the organization over the ministry of these churches?** Was there a “regional director”? These congregations were within 100 miles of each other, so one man could have easily been in charge of all of them. If the Apostle John had been trained in hierarchical government by Christ, would not he know to put someone in charge of an area with so many problems? **But there seems to be no evidence of any of these things.**

Revelation 2 & 3 are messages **from our Savior**

directly to His people! He promises rewards to individuals who overcome and punishments to those who do not. There is never a mention of a human hierarchy that will come in and “clean up” the problems, replace ministers, or disfellowship the sinners and false teachers. Each message is written to the “angel” of a church. The Greek word here is *aggelos*, which means “messenger” and is sometimes used to represent a human messenger (Matt 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24,27; 9:52; Jms 2:25). **This word is never used as a mark of authority over another.** The job of the messenger was to convey the message to the church (Greek *ekklesia*—an assembly of believers).

Obviously, each of these congregations could have had overseers (bishops), pastors, teachers, prophets, evangelists, ministers, healers, administrators, helpers, and other functions which our Savior promised to place in his church. But we simply **do not find any hierarchical structure where some human has authority over other congregational leaders** and where members are cast out of the congregation by one man’s decision. (For a detailed study of this matter, write for our article *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?*)

Non-revelation 2:

¹“To the **pastor over** the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ²“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those in **other groups** who are evil. And you have **discredited brethren who have tested** those who say they are apostles and are not, **and labeled those brethren liars**; ³and you have persevered and have patience, and have **continually promoted “the work”** and have not become weary. ⁴Nevertheless I have this against your **members**, that **they** have left **their first love**. ⁵**Tell them to remember therefore the amount of tithes and offerings** from where **they** have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else **someone from Church Administration** will come to **them** quickly and **disfellowship them**—unless **CAD decides that they have repented**. ⁶But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the “independents,” which **headquarters told you to hate**. ⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the **person ‘over him’** says. To him who **stays in the organization**, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

⁸“And to the **pastor over** the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: ⁹“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. **Also, fret not that you almost never hear from headquarters. They are very busy. Spiritually rich, physically poor, persecuted churches are a low priority for them. They trust Me to take care of you.**”

¹²“And to the **pastor over** the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴But I have a

few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. ¹⁶Repent, or else **headquarters will take action. If you, the pastor, cannot get control of the situation, you will be demoted or transferred to Smyrna. Those whom Church Administration determines to be ‘continuing in sin’ will be disfellowshipped. Big contributors, prominent men and pretty women who are solidly ‘behind headquarters’ need not be fearful if they have a little sexual immorality or other sin that is not well known—you may even be surprised at Church Administration’s understanding of the need for mercy in such cases. We would not disfellowship someone if it might really hurt the “work” in Pergamos.** ¹⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the **person ‘over him’** says. To him who **stays in the organization** I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who

We dogmatically state that this article is not scripture.

Our Messiah's instructions to the churches can be read in Revelation 2 and 3 of any Bible. We have written this article to show how many changes would be necessary to make these chapters fit into the standard practice of hierarchical congregations. Sometimes, sarcasm will reach people when simple, kind words will not (1Kng 18:27; Gal 5:12; 2Cor 11:23,19.)

receives it (and of course, those over him)."
 18"And to the pastor over the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: 19'I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. 20'Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21'And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22'Therefore, John will come to Thyatira before this letter arrives to publicly mark and disfellowship both Jezebel, and you, the pastor, for allowing her. Others loyal to headquarters will come during the next few months in order to retain as much of the congregation as possible. 23'Even though there are many old letters in Headquarters files complaining about you and Jezebel, we ignored them because they were all "in a bad attitude." 24'Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, you are still responsible to sacrifice and give more to get the work in Thyatira going again. 25'But hold fast to headquarters till I come. 26'And he who stays in the organization, and follows it's instructions until the end, to him I will give power over other people in the organization—27'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as I also have received from My Father; 28'and whoever has a 'big job' in the Work now, will also have a 'big job' in the God's Kingdom. 29'He who has an ear, let him hear what

the person 'over him' says."

Non-revelation 3:

14"And to the pastor over the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2'Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. 3'Remember therefore how you have received and heard; dig out and study old hierarchical literature; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, a visiting evangelist will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour he will come upon you; but he will kick out those losers who do not measure up. 4'You have a few names even in Sardis who are 100% behind the organization, and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5'He who remains loyal to the organization shall be clothed in white garments, and church administration will not blot out his name from the corporate membership list; but will confess his name before the Father and before His angels. 6'He who has an ear, let him hear what the person 'over him' says."

7"And to the pastor over the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens": 8"I know your works. See, I have set before you the open door of TV, radio, and magazines, and the only one who can shut it are members who do not send in enough money; for you have a little strength compared to the Roman Catholic Church, but more money than nearly all Sabbath-keeping groups in history, and you have claimed to be the only ones doing a work in My name. 9'Indeed I will make those members of your congregation come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10'Because you have persevered with your hierarchical government, in spite of the individual suffering you have caused, I will let you teach your members that staying in your organization will keep them from the hour of trial which shall come

upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. That will compel a lot of members to stay who would otherwise leave. 11'Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast to headquarters so that no "dissident" group may take your crown or your tithes. 12'He who stays loyal to the organization will get the awesome, humongous Philadelphian reward which will make everyone else in the Kingdom look like a peon in comparison. 13'He who has an ear, let him hear what the person 'over him' says."

14'And I, John, decided to use my authority and write directly to the Laodicean brethren myself. It is true that there are a few problems with your works, that you are neither cold nor hot, yes, even lukewarm; and that you think you are 17"rich, wealthy, and have need of nothing," But the ministry has authority over you so I am going to tell you your number one problem the way everyone in Church Administration sees it. The problem is that you Laodiceans are in a lukewarm organization. You should be in our organization where the "big work" is being done. 18'You need to buy "gold refined in the fire" which means you ought to be sending your tithes and offerings only to us. 19'We are not being unreasonable in our request to you, As many as we love, we rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20'Behold, we stand at the door and knock: We are sending you free literature, and designing our "gospel preaching" to capture your attention as much as we are trying to reach the unconverted. If anyone hears our voice and opens the door and looks like he wants to become a member of our organization, we will come in to him and dine with him, and he with us. But if anyone comes asking difficult questions or upsets our paying members, we will spew you out of our mouth. 21'To him who joins our organization, we will "put in a good word for you" so you can hopefully sit with Him on His throne. 22'He who has an ear, let him hear our definition of which organization is doing the work, and let him join and submit himself to us.

(We hope this helped you compare some of today's "church letters" with Christ's letters.) —Norman S. Edwards

Is a Doctrinal Statement a Basis for Unity?

Most Church organizations spend a great deal of man-hours & money preparing a statement of beliefs. It is usually their best attempt to summarize the important doctrines of the Bible. The manner in which organizations attempt to enforce these beliefs varies from quietly teaching them to members, to claiming they are essential for salvation to punishments given for disobedience of “the statement of beliefs.”

What are your personal beliefs? Why do you have them? **Have you adopted an organization’s Statement of beliefs as your own? Are there a few points that you see differently than your organization? Do you fellowship with people only if they have beliefs identical to your own?** The answers to these questions are important. We will discuss them as we go on.

Most people probably realize that some beliefs are more important than others. Some roughly separate them into **dogmas**—things that must be believed for salvation and membership, **doctrines**—things they hold to be true, but not necessarily essential for salvation, and **personal understandings**—things that one holds to be true, but cannot necessarily be completely proven from Scripture.

Use of Doctrinal Statements

Dogmatic doctrinal statements (beliefs required for Salvation) only make sense for Church organizations that teach they are the “one and only true church.” If a church teaches that some people in other groups with different doctrinal statements also have salvation, then how can they teach that their own doctrinal statement is required for Salvation?

Servants’ News has printed many articles showing that the Bible does not establish one human organization as the “true church.” Furthermore, history shows that there is no Sabbath-teaching organization that has continually taught the same doctrines since the time of Christ. We believe that the Church (the body of true believers) has been composed of individuals with the Holy Spirit—some attend services sponsored by organizations, some attend non-

aligned services. Please see our literature list to obtain some of these articles.

Please think for a moment. Do the doctrinal statements of the various organizations serve to unify the brethren in one True Church or do such statements divide them? Unfortunately, these statements usually work to divide brethren. We have often observed groups that could not fellowship with each other because of some minor point of disagreement in their doctrinal statements. Such statements usually do not contain a detailed explanation of each doctrine from the Bible, but usually list only a summary and the most relevant scriptures. Doctrinal statements almost never deal with the “difficult scriptures” that appear to refute a given doctrine. People debating doctrinal statements often do not have the necessary information to evaluate exactly why the organization has that doctrine. In order to understand the teaching in detail, a person must obtain a booklet or sermon from the relevant organization—if such a thing exists.

In a world where church organizations often split and regroup, doctrinal statements are almost never the work of an individual or committee studying the Bible to see what it says. They are usually a revision of some previous group’s statement. The people writing them are often not even aware of other common teachings about similar subjects.

Furthermore, firm doctrinal statements tend to limit Bible study, rather than encourage it. Many members of church organizations know very little about the content of their organization’s statement. Officially, the organization might encourage their members to study their statement, but in practice, the member who never studies the doctrinal statement will have far less difficulty with the church leadership than the one who diligently studies all of the doctrines, but has serious questions about one or two of them.

If we really believe that our Savior is training humans to reign with him (Rev 20:4), what does He want? Does He want people who have accepted a man-made statement? Or does He want people who do not accept a doctrine until they have studied it in the Bible and

understand it themselves?

While it is not an inherently evil thing to publish a summary of Bible teaching, it would seem to be a mistake for an organization to ask anyone to believe such a summary unless its principles are clearly expounded and common questions are answered by other literature. Anyone who is ministering to a congregation must know that the Eternal’s laws are to be written on people’s hearts (Heb 8:10;10:16). Convincing “church members” to accept doctrines that are written on paper and not understood from the Living Word is little different than ancient Israelites trying to follow laws written on tables of stone.

If the members of an organization believe that they are still growing and learning new truth, then it seems like a complete mistake to insist that they all believe a fixed doctrinal statement. The Bible shows that truth was not always revealed to “the man at the top,” but that the Eternal spoke through a variety of prophets, apostles, teachers, etc.

This article is not an effort to “water down” doctrine or to get people to change beliefs they have learned from the Bible. It is an effort to point out where unity of practice and belief is necessary for us to fellowship and cooperate with other groups. It is an effort to encourage people to expand the group of people with which they learn and teach biblical subjects. **We are asking you to realize that if you continue to limit your fellowship to only those who believe exactly like you do, you may soon find yourself alone.**

Think of your children or the children of other believers. Whom will they marry? Only someone from your group? (Is there anyone?) If time goes on twenty more years, who will be the Bible teachers then? Who will train them? Who will accept them as teachers?

As this article continues, we offer a same classification of beliefs and practices—classifying those things that are most important for ongoing fellowship. We realize that most of our readers may

have different opinions as to how doctrines should be classified. That is good. The main point is that as groups form, break up, and form again, it is much more important that we have our own personal standards of practice and doctrine which we understand and keep. From there, we can find a subset which we feel is necessary to hold in common with the people with whom we fellowship. **If we hold as our belief the doctrinal statement of whatever organization we are attending at a particular time, we will indeed be “blown about by every wind of doctrine.”**

How Can People Work Together if They Have Different Doctrines?

Working together with people who hold doctrines different than yours is much easier than you might expect. If a house is in a forest where there are many fires, it is much easier to make the outside of the house able to withstand fire, than it is to try to stop numerous forest fires from reaching the house. Similarly, it is much easier to work together with a person who is strong enough to withstand doctrinal diversity than it is to try to stop every doctrinal idea from reaching him or her.

Of all the things that you believe, only a small part of them are really essential to hold in common with those with whom you fellowship.

Let us examine the difference between **beliefs, teachings, and practices.**

Beliefs are things that people hold within themselves. In a sense, we never really know what anyone believes because we cannot see into their mind. We only know what they claim or appear to believe. If you believe that Christ eternally existed, but the person next to you believes He was created, how will you ever know if he does not talk about it? While our **personal beliefs** are most important, as they are the basis for our teachings and practices, **other people's beliefs** are irrelevant to you unless they teach or practice them in a way that will influence you.

Teachings are beliefs that a person expounds. Teaching may occur in an organized group or in informal conversation. Teachings should be based solidly on Scripture and history, and done in a loving, non-confrontational manner. A person should be able to listen to a

teaching that is different from his belief without becoming upset and leaving a group. When you hear a teaching that you disagree with, it is a chance to review the basis for your own belief on the subject—and, if the situation is right, to show others where they may be wrong. Some **fundamental teachings** are very important to everyone. It would be difficult to fellowship with a group where you were in disagreement on many fundamental teachings. On the other hand, groups can have great differences in their **peripheral teachings.**

Practices are things that people do based on their beliefs. There are both **personal practices** and **group practices.** Personal practices include things like the way a person gives and helps others, the way a person dresses for services, how a person keeps the Sabbath at home, etc. Group practices include the writings that they regard as Scripture, the days that they worship, the format of their worship service, the songs they sing, etc. Sometimes personal practices can affect the entire group: for example, people should not bring unclean food to a potluck when the others there do not want to eat it. Romans 14 shows how brethren should cooperate with the personal practices of others in a group. Even if someone believes they must be a vegetarian, others should not belittle or try to stop their practice.

Clearly, **it is more important for brethren that meet together to agree on group practices than it is for them to agree on teachings.** If they cannot agree on major group practices, they probably cannot work together. It is important to agree on fundamental teachings and nice to agree on individual practices and peripheral teachings—but some disagreement is quite acceptable. We do not all learn everything at the same time. People will learn far more in an environment where they are responsible for evaluating teachings from the scripture than they will in an environment where they only hear teachings. Diverse beliefs, if people do not try to push them on others, should not create any trouble in a fellowship.

How Do We Classify Doctrines as Practices, Teachings or Beliefs?

So how do we go about deciding which practices, teachings, and beliefs we must hold in common in order to fel-

lowship. Below, we give a **sample** of the way we understand it.

We included items that commonly appear in doctrinal statements, **but classified them in regard to people fellowshiping together.** We have made these classifications with long-time fellowship in mind (years). Obviously, it would be possible to visit a congregation or even fellowship for a few weeks without agreement on some of the items listed below.

Doctrines which we feel are not exceptionally clear in the Bible are toward the end of the list. Other doctrines, which we feel are very clear, may also appear near the end of the list because they do not have much bearing on the functioning of a congregation. **Therefore, these doctrines are not listed in order of importance to a person's life or in the best order for preaching to others—they are classified for importance for being able to conduct group fellowship.**

Group Practices

1. The Old and New Testaments are inspired Scripture, show the way to Salvation, give the basis for living a righteous life, and are the truths used for judging other teaching believed to be of the Holy Spirit. If people do not accept both Old and New Testaments or if they regard other men's writings or sayings as equal to Scripture, little can be accomplished together.

2. Worship services are conducted on the Sabbath day, which is from evening Friday to evening Saturday.

3. Form of worship services. (What types of speaking, music, and other activities are a part of services?) Are questions permitted? Who is permitted to do which functions? What kinds of leaders are recognized, etc.?) The Bible says a lot about these subjects, but does not give specifics such as how many minutes various events should take or what hymnal(s) to use. A group committed to study the Bible in this area and modify their services as they learn can probably work together. Individuals committed to using only a format of services from a previous church organization probably cannot meet with individuals committed to following the Scripture in this area.

4. Immersion baptism and the laying on of hands are performed for

people who have **repented from dead works** (turned from sin—the transgression of the law) and have **faith toward God**. (First four doctrines from list in Hebrews 6:1-2) This is a vital step on the road to salvation, which will be given to those that continue to yield themselves to the Eternal until the end.

5. Salvation is available to mature individuals of all races and genders. No one will be excluded from attending a service based on their race or gender.

6. Worship services are available to people no matter how they are dressed, richly or poorly (Jms 2).

7. Only biblically “clean food” will be served at social occasions. Individuals are free to reject the food laws of the Bible as long as they respect those who do accept them.

Fundamental Teachings

1. There is one supreme Eternal Creator, the Father of all that exists. He is perfect in love, justice, knowledge, power, authority, and any other good thing of which we might think. Our perception of Him is based on how He reveals Himself in Scripture, not on human logic attempting to define what an all-powerful being must be like.

2. Jesus (Yeshua, Yashua, etc.) of Nazareth was born of the virgin Mary, is the “only begotten Son” of the Father, lived a perfect life as a human, died as a sacrifice for the sins of all people, rose from the dead, and now serves as our high priest. (This statement intentionally emphasizes Jesus’ redemptive role and avoids questions about His existence before he was born and his future return.)

3. The Holy Spirit is the power used by the Father and the Son to do their will. This power is capable of communicating words, thoughts, emotions, and character. However, the Holy Spirit is not a separate “person” as it is not a separate cognitive entity (John 16:13), nor is it ever seen in a physical form as are the Father and the Son (Acts 7:55, etc.). The Holy Spirit is every member’s link to the Eternal for comfort, teaching, and power to do good works.

4. Biblical law is the expression of the Eternal’s mind in teaching people how to get along with each other. Some of the laws given ancient Israel, such as the 10 commandments and the

“golden rule,” are spiritual principles and should be followed directly by believers today. Other Biblical law, such as laws governing temple sacrifices and the physical nation of Israel have spiritual implications and lessons for us today, but can no longer be used directly. Following the Eternal’s law is a fruit of the Holy Spirit in us, not a requirement for salvation.

5. All people who die will be raised from the dead in the future and eternally judged for their actions. (Last 2 doctrines in Hebrews 6:2.) The Eternal’s way will be taught to those who have not known it. Those who accept the forgiveness of our Savior and strive to obey Him with their whole being will be given Eternal life as His sons. Those who reject His way will be destroyed forever.

6. The one true Church of God is a spiritual entity composed of all people with the Holy Spirit. As human beings, we cannot be absolutely sure who all of these people are. We endeavor to have a special love for all of the brethren and are willing to fellowship with those who are willing to fellowship with us. However, sometimes true believers have honest differences which cause them to separate, but still remain brethren (Acts 15:37-39). A person can be barred from attending with a group only by following the procedure outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. The true Church is **not** a corporation or an organization of men.

Personal Practices with Significant Impact on a Group

1. Holy Day observance. This includes whether holy days should be observed at all, the calendar by which to observe them, the counting of Pentecost, the timing of Passover, the observing of new moons, and the non-observance of Pagan days (Christmas, Easter, Valentines Day, Halloween, etc.). Obviously, it is easiest for a group of people if they observe the same days, but it is not hard to make allowance for people who have sincere convictions about keeping a day at a different time

2. Use of divine names. There are many different beliefs about how the Hebrew divine name should be pronounced and when it should be used. (The Hebrew YHVH is variously pronounced as *Yahweh*, *Jehova*, *Yehova*,

Ee-ow-ah, etc. Others prefer to use a replacement such as “Lord,” *Adonai*, *HaShem*, etc. There are also various pronunciations of our Savior’s name: Jesus, Yashuah, Yeshua, etc.) It is easier to sing together and write literature if brethren are of like mind on this point, but it is very possible to work together when people differ, but are content to do what they believe rather than try to get others to do what they believe.

3. Personal Sabbath-keeping practices that may affect the group. One issue is the exact time when people should start and stop observing the Sabbath (sunset as observed, sunset as calculated, dusk, dark, when candles are lit, when they are ready, etc.). Whether or not the Eternal would want us to eat at a restaurant on the Sabbath can be a major difficulty in a congregation if a significant amount of their fellowship tends to take place at a restaurant before or after services. Finally, if brethren are spending a significant part of their Sabbath together, questions of which activities are appropriate for adults and children often surface.

Beliefs with a Major Impact on a Group’s Teaching

(If groups disagree on the points below, they can still work together, but they will experience much conflicting teaching.)

1. Christ will return to Earth for a literal 1000 year reign over the kingdoms of this world—showing what is possible to do on the Earth with righteous leadership. A related teaching is that mankind has had 6000 years to live his way—and obviously made quite a mess.

2. The English-speaking countries and other northwest European nations are the descendants of the 10 “lost tribes” of Israel. The historical evidence for this teaching is very strong, but deciding which tribes have descended to which countries today is open to interpretation. Also, some groups misuse this teaching to claim some peoples are inferior. Obviously, this teaching is less significant when working with non-Israelite nations.

3. Satan and the spirit world. Some people do not believe in a literal devil or demons. They can get along with those who do, but will have trouble understanding people with demon prob-

lems. They may also have a hard time realizing it when they are deceived by Satan and his demons.

4. Prophetic interpretation. There are numerous interpretations of the prophecies of the Bible. Numerous groups have attempted to explain them and have been wrong. Groups need to learn to teach prophecy as "possible understandings" and allow differing points of view. Many groups feel they need to preach prophecy strongly in order to get and keep members. Unfortunately, they forget that when they preach erroneous prophecy, many of those people who came because of prophecy often leave when the prophecies fail.

5. Preaching the Gospel to unbelievers. Most brethren agree that this should be done, but there are often questions about how it should be done, and what should be preached. A group will need to come to some agreement about which of the above and below doctrines they will preach. It is quite possible to agree to teach more than one understanding of an issue and ask the "new convert" to exercise their Bible and the Holy Spirit to come to a decision as to what they should do.

Beliefs and Practices that Should have Less Impact on Fellowship

(Some of these doctrines may seem foundational—some of them are. Some may seem ridiculous—we think some of them are. But we ask you to ask yourself, "How would I be affected if the person in services next to me believes differently on this point?" As long as you believe you understand it from the Bible, is not your relationship with the Eternal secure? We list these doctrines in alphabetical order, without numbers, for convenience. We have added brief comments where it may be helpful.)

Baptism of fire.

Born again. (This was probably never intended as a doctrine by the New Testament writers. They used analogies to illustrate particular points and were not always consistent—new believers are compared both to fetuses and already born babies in different scriptures.)

Church eras. (Seven times in Revelation 2 & 3, every person is told to listen to every message to

every church. There is no specific indication that these are seven sequential time periods. It is possible that they have a sequential fulfillment as well as a fulfillment in every age, but it is hard to see basing a major doctrine, or even the name of a church organization, on this subjective interpretation.)

Divorce and remarriage. (People can find a group that will permit almost any divorce or remarriage. Individual commitment to the Bible is all that really can restrain people.)

Ezekiel warning message. (If the Eternal inspires someone to preach Ezekiel's warning, then he should do it, but the Bible does not assign this commission to every believer.)

Faith—your precise definition.

Family of God. (This is a semantic difference from believers becoming "children of God." Since the expression "family of God" does not appear in most Bibles, why make an issue about it?)

Giving (There is no Bible example of any preaching or ministry that did not begin or complete due to lack of money. Brethren should not become upset over this less significant issue.)

Gospel—your precise definition.

Grace—your precise definition.

Herbert Armstrong—Was he the Elijah, a villain, or a Solomon-like figure that did some things good and some bad? (Our relationship with the Eternal should not depend on what Armstrong said. His "18 restored truths" contained much truth, but some error—nearly all of them were taught by at least one other Bible teacher before him.)

History of the Church of God. (Hopefully, church groups will not get in the business of blessing certain versions of history.)

Interracial marriage.

Jesus' nature before he was born of Mary.

Justification—your precise definition.

Kingdom of God—your precise definition.

Laying on of hands—Exactly when is this done in addition to baptism and healing?

Man becomes God. (Men were made in God's image and when changed we shall be like Him—1Jn 3:2. Avoid expressions not in the Bible.)

Man's nature—What was it before and after Adam & Eve sinned.

Mystery of the Ages—Is this book recognized as a doctrinal statement?

Not everyone is being called now.

Place of safety.

Prophetic symbol interpretation.

Resurrections—Exactly how many are there, who is in them, and when do they occur?

Sabbath being a sign.

Sanctification—your precise definition.

Spirit in Man.

Tithes, three kinds. (See note under "Giving".)

We realize that the above list does not specifically spell out many things that people hold as doctrine (There are numerous things that this writer practices and believes that are not listed here). We realize that many of our readers would feel uncomfortable going to a service where people have different beliefs on some of these "less impact" subjects. But we ask you this question, **"If we are sure that nearly all that we believe is Biblical, then why aren't we happy to accept people with different beliefs into our services or attend their services so that we can help teach them the truth where they are wrong?"** Is it possible that associating with kind, sincere, loving people who study the Bible and form difference conclusions makes us uncomfortable? Are we afraid that we will not be able to answer them from Scripture or that we might even find that we have been wrong at times?

What do you think our Father in heaven wants? Does He want a group of people who all believe the same thing to get together so they can spend their study time assuring themselves how much they know? Or would He want a group come humbly together with some differing options, earnestly searching the Scriptures and praying to Him to understand the truth?

This article is not about "watering down doctrine." It is about strengthening personal doctrine to the point where **we can walk among others with different doctrine, and still come out unscathed.** It is about doctrine that can live in your heart, no matter what may happen to your family, friends, or church organizations.

—Norman S. Edwards



News from Local Congregations



Charleston West Virginia Meeting

Everyone is invited to an all-day Sabbath December 13 in Charleston, West Virginia. Norman Edwards, *Servants' News* editor, will be the guest speaker. The schedule is:

11-12 AM Bible Study:

*Why Does the Eternal Let
Congregations Splinter?*

12-2 PM Luncheon (provided)

2 - 4 PM Services:

*The Bible, What is Most
Important for Me to Know?*

For more information, contact George Hampton, PO Box 626, Poca, WV 25159; tel: 304-586-3070; e-mail: cogpoca@aol.com or cogpoca@msn.com. Alternate contact: Franklin Rogers, tel: 304-595-6648.

Editor Sought for Sabbath Sentinel Magazine

For over 50 years, the Bible Sabbath Association has produced the Sabbath Sentinel Magazine. The Bible Sabbath Association is dedicated to spreading knowledge of the seventh day Sabbath, but attempts to avoid a firm position on other doctrine. The current editor of the full-color Sabbath Sentinel, Syd Cleveland, has become too busy in his own Sabbatarian congregation to continue as editor.

Anyone wishing to serve in this way should contact Richard Nickels at 307-686-5191, or write to 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718.

Assembly of Yahweh Unity Conf.

The Unity Conference for 1997 was held August 1, 2 and 3 at the Cisco, Texas facilities of Assembly of Yahweh, 7th Day.

About 190 brethren were present on the weekly Sabbath, with a few less for each of the other days. Three major Assemblies and numerous smaller ones

were represented.

It was certainly good to see old friends again that we had not seen in some time, and to meet other brethren for the first time.

I personally felt that this year's conference was a productive endeavor, in which cooperation between and among the visiting assemblies was discussed. It seems especially fitting that this should be the case, since we are all brothers and sisters striving for the same goal.

Several subjects were discussed, not all of which were controversial. The two that brought the most comment from the audience concerned the proper date for Passover and the Holy Days of Unleavened Bread, and a way of determining the beginning of the Scriptural year by use of the signs of the Zodiac.

Several presentations were more of an exhortive nature, encouraging us to become more like Yahshua.

Frank Brown shared seven ways to achieve unity: 1) seek agreement but expect differences; 2) repent, be humble, regard others better than yourself; 3) respect the view of others; 4) lead by example, be a servant to others; 5) be patient with others; 6) be genuinely concerned for the welfare of others, this is true love; 7) WORK at becoming a better person, exercise the spirit Yahweh has given you, strive to overcome the carnality that we all have.

—Frank Brown and Mike Mastropaolo, both of Arkansas.

Dr Rick Sherrod Coming to Australia!

Presenting a series of talks on
Israel in prophecy:

**Who and Where are the
Lost Ten Tribes?**

During Dr. Rick Sherrod's years in the field ministry, he began an

extensive and sustained investigation of the origins of the Anglo-Saxon people. Drawing from his background as a research scholar in Modern British History (Ph.D., Michigan State University, 1980) and his extensive travels through both the British Isles and the Middle East, he laid the foundation for a series of presentations on "Israel in Prophecy: Who and Where Are the Lost Ten Tribes?"

Dr. Rick Sherrod travels frequently on the weekends, making Sabbath-day visits to church congregations throughout the United States. His typical inaugural visit includes a morning hour and a half long sermon on "The Promise to Abraham and Principles of Interpreting Prophecy," followed by a two hour and fifteen minute Bible study/slide show on "The 40 Pivotal Years." The latter presentation explores the critical period of 1775-1815 AD, a time during which the foundation for the Anglo-American world dominance of the last two centuries was laid. He has also visited various churches to present his Bible study/slide show "A Company of Nations," examining the remarkable rise of the British Empire. He has also written in-depth theses and papers on the subject.

Rick Sherrod is a long-time member of the Church of God and has served in the ministry since 1986. During the mid-1980s, he worked at the church's world headquarters where he taught and served as the principal of Imperial Schools (grades 7-12) before taking a position in the field ministry in the South-eastern United States (1986-1989). He has also worked with church youth for more than a decade, not only in Youth Opportunities United and Youth Educational Services offices, but as a central member of the Summer Educational Program staff in Orr, Minnesota where he served as Assistant Camp Director from 1986-1989.

In 1990, Dr. Sherrod became a faculty member at Ambassador University where he taught history courses, including Western Civilisation, Ancient Israel, the History of England, Modern European History, Renaissance and Reformation, and Introduction to Middle Eastern Archaeology. He also taught U. S. history survey at Tyler Junior College, and America During the World Wars at the University of Texas at Tyler. When the consolidation of the Ambassador campuses occurred in the summer of 1990, Dr. Sherrod moved from Pasadena, California to Big Sandy, Texas where he served as associate professor of history and history department chair for the following six academic years.

Sherrod's Bible study/slide shows explore the connection between the modern British and American people and the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel from antiquity.

Presentations will cover: the Abrahamic Covenant; the history of the idea of British-Israelism; the Hermeneutics of prophecy; the captivity of the Northern Kingdom at the hands of the Assyrians; the migrations of post-8th century BC Israel; the "Seven Times" of Leviticus 26; the slow rise of the Anglo-Saxon people from 1066 to 1775; the critical 40 years of 1775-1815; the separation of Ephraim and Mannish into the two greatest nations of the 19th and 20th centuries (Gen.48); the economic fulfillment of the Gen. 49 prophecies relevant to the modern-day descendants of Joseph; the dominance of the Anglo-American people in the post-1815 A. D. world; and the relevance of the modern-day identity of the Lost Ten Tribes to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Sherrod makes his visits to congregations in exchange for travel expenses being met. As a result we are bringing him to Australia in late May/early June 1998. He will be appearing in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

For this purpose we are setting up a special bank account to take donations toward this worthwhile cause. It will be fully accountable and monitored. If just 30 people donated \$2.50 a week over the next 9 months, we would have adequate funds to bring him over and

to pay for prominent advertising.

If you are interested in helping, please contact us and we will let you know how to contribute toward and how to assist in his lecture series. And if you would like to sponsor him, please let us know. We would like to hear from you as soon as possible so planning can commence.

Please send your name, address, telephone number, and/or e-mail address and how you would like to help to:

Israel in Prophecy Lecture Series
GPO BOX 864, Sydney 2001 Australia.

For further information ring: (02) 9745 2964 (Sydney) or e-mail: craig@triode.net.au

—Craig White

Fellowship In Chicago

The Church of God-7th Day in Chicago, Illinois, will welcome your visit. They teach and observe the Sabbath, holy days, and festival seasons. If you are from there, or if you are just passing through, and want to visit, please contact:

True Tabernacle Church of God
2843 West Harrison Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612
(773) 722-7741
Contact: Pastor Fleming Hawkins
(773) 994-5398

Long Time Elder Dies

William "Bill" Bodine was born Dec. 4, 1900 and died Sept. 25, 1997 at the age of 96. He first tried his hand at farming, but hated it. He then learned carpentry, and became an accomplished home builder. This, as well as the ministry, was his life's work. He was ordained an Elder in the COG 7th Day in 1929 or 1930.

By 1933, several Elders in the COG 7th Day had come to realize that the Church was not organized along Biblical lines, as given in the Book of Acts. So a reorganization was planned as its need became more apparent. They wanted to restore the Scriptural organization with twelve to look after the spiritual affairs of the church, and seven to take charge of the financial business, and also the seventy to go forth two by two in giving the warning message.

The time and place to do this work was set for November 4, 1933, at Salem, Vest Virginia. Weeks prior to this, a call was sent out world-wide for prayer that God would again choose men to lead His church as in the former time.

One hundred forty names were put into a box, and a man was chosen to draw the names. The names of the 12 were drawn first, and then after another short prayer, the names of the 70 were drawn. Elder William Bodine of Arkansas was number 5. Some of the others chosen were Elder Herbert Armstrong of Oregon, and Bill's brother, Elder Albert Bodine of Arkansas.

Finally, the names of the 7 were drawn to place over the church's business affairs.

A full account of this meeting was reported in the November 6, 1933, issue of the Bible Advocate, published that month in Salem, WV.

Circa 1935, Bill became aware that the Heavenly Father had a name, and that Lord and God are actually titles. So he resigned from the COG 7th day, and affiliated with the so-called "Sacred Names" groups from that time on until his death.

He built a church building north of Van Buren, AR, and held services there for many years, proclaiming end time prophetic events, mainly from the Books of Daniel and Revelation. He also witnessed to untold numbers of people with whom he came in contact, including people for whom he was building houses. Many conversions resulted from his untiring efforts.

He is survived by one daughter, Gwen Kerby of Van Buren, AR, three grand-children and six great-grand children, and a host of spiritual "sons and daughters."

—Frank Brown

Two Great Sources of News

While *Servants' News* does not accept paid advertising, we have included the following information because we believe it is of benefit to our readers. We hope that our readers will not be offended that there are costs associated with these two services. Neither of these efforts are sponsored by "ministries" with a continual source of economic support. The individuals involved pri-

marily hope to cover costs—none of them will be getting wealthy from these services! —NSE

THE JOURNAL: NEWS OF THE CHURCHES OF GOD

Servants' News highly recommends this publication. It contains news of local congregations and regional events that we would like to include, but simply do not have the time, space, and ability to do so. It also contains many fine features and doctrinal articles. Sometimes writers will send an excellent article to both *Servants' News* and the Journal. If *The Journal* prints it first, we will usually not print it just to avoid duplication between the publications.

You may obtain one free sample copy of *The Journal* from *Servants' News* or simply subscribe by sending \$10 for 6 issues, \$18 for 12 issues, or \$32 for 24 issues to:

The Journal, Box 1020, Big Sandy, TX 75755.

Remember to include your name, address, city and state and, optionally, your phone number.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT EVENTS

Servants' News recommends this publication. PERSPECTIVES is a quarterly periodical published for the purpose of informing and helping its readers understand the broad cultural, social, political, historical, and prophetic events of today's world. It is edited by Melvin Rhodes, a man with much international experience. Other editors include Darris McNeely, Rick Sherrod, and Diane Rhodes. It has little overlap in content with *Servants' News* or *The Journal*.

You may obtain one free sample copy from *Servants' News* or subscribe by sending \$12 (\$20 non-USA) for a year subscription to:

PERSPECTIVES, PO Box 153, Okemos, MI 48805-0153

Remember to include your name, address, city and state and, optionally, your phone number.

Sept/Oct 1997

"Diana" from page 22

who makes "good head-of-state decisions" but has a corrupt personal life.

The history of British royalty is much like that of the kings of Israel recorded in the Bible. A very few were good, many were part good and part bad, and some were very bad. While multiple wives are no longer in style, some members of the current royal family simply have had a great many sexual partners which they never married. Nearly all had armies, security forces, and lived a life of luxury at the expense of the people they were supposed to serve. The King or Queen of England is the head of the Anglican Church—a church quite similar in government, practice, and doctrine to the Roman Catholic Church. With a few notable exceptions, the English royalty has done little to govern England or to do good in the world, but consumes a lot of resources.

We must realize that worldly kings, even if they are descended from King David himself, do not represent the Eternal and His government. Deuteronomy 28, the great prophecy of how the Eternal ultimately deals with those who disobey, specifically covers kings:

The Lord will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. You will become a thing of horror and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations where the LORD will drive you (Deut 28:36-37, NIV).

While Princess Diana did not escape the sins so common in the English royal family, she did make an notable individual effort to forego the "we are more important than you" customs and to really serve the people. Whereas many wealthy women die with closets full of clothes—the outfits that they wore to the special occasions in their lives, Diana sold almost everything she wore at auction and donated millions in proceeds to charity. In effect, she caused people with extra money to voluntarily contribute to charity for the privilege of receiving her "used clothing." This is far superior to other leaders that frequently use their "status" to convince, entice, or force poorer people to pay into an endless stream of taxes, lotteries, insurance and other overly-expensive items that benefit the leaders more than the people.

It May All Work For Good

We are not Diana's judge, nor are we the judge of the English royal family. One who judges in righteousness and truth will

do that (Rev 19:11). It is unlikely that anyone reading this will reform the British Royalty. Maybe, this tragedy will cause young prince William or Harry to finish what their mother only began to do—to dispense with many of the customs and barriers that produce a false sense of superiority among the "royalty". One or both of these young men could look into the Bible and seek to understand what the Eternal expects of them and their people. They could cry out and show their people their sins (Is 58:1) in a way that almost no one else on Earth could. When they speak, a good portion of the world will listen. If these young men do rise up to show their family, their country, and the Anglican church how far they have strayed from the Eternal and the Bible, their mother's untimely death would not be in vain. This writer has prayed that these young men will have that opportunity. Whether or not they will accept such a challenge depends on them, and to a lesser degree, their advisors. If we can learn anything from the Old Testament, it is that the Eternal often does not force human leaders to do anything.

In summary, Princess Diana did much to break down the overemphasis on formality by the English royalty and made a real effort to serve people—though she had obvious problems of her own. Her death was a happenstance in a world where numerous people live without regard to Bible teachings and common sense. Unfortunate experiences, similar to hers, occur in the lives of other families almost every day. Her death can be a great blessing to many if they will learn from it and change their lives. Her sons, William and Harry, suffered the greatest loss in this tragic event. They also stand to gain the most if this event triggers even a little of the massive repentance and change that is needed in their family and their country.

It is good for us to understand this important world event, but it is more important that we understand and correct the state of our own lives and families. We will be individually held accountable in areas where we are individually responsible. Do we pray for the Eternal's forgiveness and instruction every day? Are we treating our spouse or children according to the righteous standards of scripture? Are we overcoming other sins which we know we have? Are we doing what we can to effectively help others whom we know are "about to crash"? Remember the words of our Savior:

...but unless you repent you will all likewise perish (Luke 13:5).

—Norman S. Edwards

Letters

& Responses

We print a representative sampling of our mail—both positive and negative. We do not include names unless we are fairly sure that the writer would not object. 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.

Human "Government of God"

LETTER: May 1996
Norm:

Thanks for mailing me the articles on *How Does The Eternal Govern Through Humans & Assembling on the Sabbath*.

I am very interested in the info you write about concerning the errors/bias of the King James Version and how the translation was bent to fit certain biases of that day.

What translation—if any—have you found that tries to correct some of these problems???

Also, are you familiar with the book "The Open Church"?

Thanks.

—Tim Campbell

RESPONSE: I am sorry to take so long to answer this ancient e-mail.

Some translations do a much better job of the non-biblical doctrine of *ordination* than others. The King James, believe it or not, is the worst—with 13 different Greek words translated "ordain," each done so only in a minority of cases (all of the Greek words are usually translated as something else). **Young's Literal Translation** is the best I have found for this subject. The English word "ordain" (and its variants) only appear 3 times (Acts 10:42; 17:26; 17:31), always translated from the Greek "horizo". The word is never used in connection with a fallible human. The common "Christian" doctrine of "ordination" of ministers and deacons would be impossible to substantiate from Young's Literal Translation.

Both the Young's Literal Translation and the Darby Bible completely avoid the

word "deacon." They translate the Greek "diakonos" as either servant, minister, or ministrant—much better than artificially inventing the office of "deacon" as the King James does.

Yes, I am familiar with *The Open Church* by James Rutz (available from Christian book-stores or The Seed Sowers, PO Box 3424, Auburn, Maine 04212-3424). Many of its principles are good, though I cannot say I support everything in the book.

—NSE

Poem About Giving People Time

LETTER: September 24, 1997
Marleen,

Here is the saying I mentioned to you on the phone.

"Flowers unfold slowly and gently, bit by bit in the sunshine, and a soul, too, must never be pushed or driven, but unfolds in its own perfect timing, to reveal its true wonder and beauty."

By The Findhom Community, The Findhom Garden, Harper Colophon Books, 1975.

—Darleen, Michigan

RESPONSE: While this is an analogy and not a scripture, its point is very good. The Bible says we can understand the Eternal from His creation (Rom 1:20). Very few things on the Earth are perfect or complete right away. They take time to grow. Not everything grows at once: some early, some late, some fast, some slow—**each as our Creator designed. We must be tolerant of our brethren who may not have the same growth path as ourselves.**

—NSE

Article on Praising God

LETTER: September 9, 1997

Dear Marleen,

[Personal section omitted]

I enjoyed the cartoon in the last *Servants' News* on "praise"—the point is well made! When you have Sabbath Services, what do you do to remedy the situation without creating a "pentecostal" type atmosphere? How do you create reverence and respect with real enthusiasm?

—Canada

RESPONSE: The problems with behavior in "pentecostal" and "charismatic" congregations are fundamentally the same as the problems with behavior in traditional "Church of God" congregations. They are two-fold: they lack understanding of what the Bible says about services, and they believe there is a certain "right-

eous" or "holy" way to act in a worship service and that everyone ought to act that way.

In the "Church of God" congregations, a person attending a service was expected to dress exceptionally well, to come early, sing staid hymns, say nothing during services, take notes during services, require their children to play silently or sleep on the floor and socialize pleasantly before and after services without bringing up any doctrinal issues that might conflict with Headquarters doctrine. Yet it was all too common to find a "Church of God" member outside of services who dressed poorly, was late for appointments, listened to wild music, never read his church notes, let his children run wild, cursed and fought with other brethren or avoided them altogether. We can see that the people thought they were being righteous by living up to a certain standard **during services** which was not really a part of their lives. Some of the above standards are good, but some were unbiblical. We are commanded to sing joyously before the Eternal—which is difficult to do with many staid hymns. We are required to "prove all things" and hear a matter before we answer it—that is hard to do when "headquarters" says "do not talk about it." **The example of the New Testament shows questions being asked in services. 1 Corinthians 14 details all manner of member participation—almost none of which is allowed in typical "Church of God" services.**

The "charismatic" congregations have the same two problems, they just have different parts wrong. They tend to sing lively music, hear messages with which they may interact, give testimonies, move or dance to the music, verbally repent of sin, cry, laugh, speak in tongues, prophesy, heal others, kneel at their altars, go out of control emotionally, and even fall over backwards and remain unconscious. The first four items mentioned are permissible for everyone in services—they are operating on truth. There is no admonition against repenting, crying, or laughing in services, but our emotions should be genuine. When people do it just because others are doing it, it is another falsehood. Speaking in other languages, prophecy, and healing are spiritual gifts—not everyone has them. Charismatic congregations seem to have far too many people pretending to have these gifts, rather than the real thing. We also find clear lack of Bible understanding: there is no command to build physical altars other than at the temple in Jerusalem; the spirit of God is the spirit of a "sound mind" (2Tim 1:7); "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the

prophets" (1Cor 14:32); and there is no biblical example of someone falling over backward who is worshipping the Eternal. There is no doubt in my mind that some Charismatic members, humbly seeking to "hear from the Lord" actually do. There is also no doubt in my mind that some seeking "an experience" actually hear from demons. We cannot know how many people there are that fall into each category.

The solution to the problems of both the "Church of God" groups and the Charismatics is simple to understand, but difficult to implement. Each has some Bible error, but we should not reject the Bible truth held by the other group because of it. It is possible to have joyful, vibrant music, sermons with questions, decency and order, and people speaking with a language or prophecy from the Eternal **without** losing emotional control or having people fall over backwards. Are there any congregations that operate this way? There are some. We, at *Servants' News* are doing our best to encourage them. But we, and most of our readers, have a long way to go.

—NSE

Nature of Christ Deliberately Ambiguous

LETTER: August 13, 1997
Dear Friends,

John Sash's letter of July 1997 *Servants' News* prompted me to write.

It seems that many of us at this time are pondering "the nature of God." There seems to be several prevalent ideas among the brethren.

Some feel that Christ is the God of the O.T., and can cite scriptures to prove it. Some feel that the Father is the God of the O.T., and can cite scriptures to prove it. Some feel that Christ existed eternally with the Father, and can cite scriptures to prove this.

Yet, others feel that Christ was created first by the Father, and then he (Christ) created all things. Guess what? These people can also cite scriptures to prove this.

And so it goes with countless other doctrines. People can disagree on many doctrines and cite scriptures out of the same Bible to back up their beliefs.

Why is this so? My own personal opinion is that God (Yahweh) has a purpose for this.

Let's just suppose for a moment that one person or one "group" had total and perfect knowledge. What would happen? We would have imperfect humans with

understanding on God's level. We would be like God, only still human! How dangerous!

His ways are higher than ours and His thoughts are higher than ours, for a reason! We see through a glass darkly, for a reason!

Perhaps it is not in our best interest to have complete understanding of "the nature of God", or the calendar, or any other issue.

We'd never have to keep on learning or seeking Him and His will for our lives. I don't think we'd be very humble.

Remember how superior those of us in WCG felt because we were "the only true church" and had "the truth?" Sure, we "preached the gospel" and "did a work", but we were told not to develop a relationship with those in "the world", and not even help them on the Sabbath in many cases.

We felt we had it made. We were made to feel better than others because we had "the truth." The Father wants us to be constantly seeking Him and ever learning. He wants us to realize that we need to totally depend on Him.

It's only natural for us to want to understand His nature, and all doctrine. But perhaps, as a loving Father, He is saying "Not yet, my child." Would you, as a parent, want your 6 year old to know everything you do? No, of course not. We are still children, and will be so until the resurrection.

I enjoy reading and listening to all the different ideas that the brethren have on doctrine, but I know that I will never have all truth or understanding until the resurrection.

Until that time I will keep on studying, learning, and giving others freedom to their own opinions, as long as they are trying to be biblical and pleasing the Father.

Love SN!

Sincerely,

—Leona Urbanek, Illinois

RESPONSE: Your letter is excellent. Some people may reject your idea, claiming that "God is not the author of confusion." Yet, look at Genesis 11:6-7: "And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there **confuse** their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." God obviously allows us to be confused sometimes for our own good. Had he not confused men's speech at Babel, they might have developed globe-destroying weapons before the "time of the end."

Undoubtedly, what was originally writ-

ten in the Bible about the nature of Christ and the Father is all true, but we just have a hard time putting it together. Also, it is possible that a few verses have been corrupted by scribes who thought they knew better. If the Eternal has allowed this corruption and given us no way to find it, then He will not hold us responsible. I can find no Scripture that states we will be judged on our knowledge of Christ's nature. Most righteous men of the Old Testament apparently knew almost nothing about Him. John the Baptist did not seem to know—he asked Christ if He were the One or if they should wait for another.

The important things in scripture, such as loving the Eternal and our neighbor as ourselves are repeated multiple times and are abundantly clear. The 10 commandments are clear. The role of our Savior in our salvation is clear. A person reading the Bible with no knowledge of traditional Christianity would never conclude that Sunday was the day of worship—nor would they conclude they should celebrate Christmas and Easter.

We, as believers, need to place much more emphasis on doing the things that are clear, and avoiding strife and divisions over issues that are less clear. Thanks again for your letter.

—NSE

A Covenant With Your Eyes

LETTER: September 1997

Summer is shedding time. Clothes are shed without a second thought. Few seem to be concerned. I am!

You must live "in the world." The big question is, are we "of the world" (John 17:11,14)? It reminds us of camouflage, the ability to be "of" the background so as to escape notice. Many "Christians" do just that—blend **in with the world** and become "of" the world. Women "of the world" wear shorts, halters, or go bra-less and frequent public swimming pools where they are met by the gazes...of men "of the world."

It was Job who said, "I have made a covenant with my eyes: how then could I gaze at a virgin?" (Job 31:1). Why the agreement with his eyes? Job knew that where the eyes linger, the heart soon follows (verse 7). That which catches the eye, often snares the heart and "out of the heart come...adulteries, fornications..." Matt 15:19,20.

Jesus said, "Everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her **has** committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matt 5:27-30.

Men, these are our passages. Other verses talk to the ladies about modesty. To be sure, women **should** make covenants, if not with their eyes...with their bodies, and dress with reverence for God...Even, should they not, much of the corruption in the world by lust (2Pet 1:4) would vanish if more men would make this covenant with their eyes.

Frankly, such a covenant will keep us away from public pools and away from magazines, etc. which exist for the purpose of lust and sexual arousal. A covenant with your eyes? **Are you man enough to do it?**

written by S. Bobbitt
submitted by C. Barch

RESPONSE: I completely agree with your concept here, though I think it applies to both sexes. Both men and women need to make "covenants with their eyes" not to look at other people to lust after them. If they are having difficulty with lusting, then they may need to avoid certain TV, movies, magazines, beaches, swimming pools and other things that are causing them to lust. But they need to individually examine themselves and determine what is causing the problem. Bible teachers should not lay out a bunch of rules regarding **what** is "alright" for a believer to do and **where** it is "alright" to go. If a person is bringing an evil name upon his congregation by frequenting "adult" movies or stores, then the congregation must deal with him as in 1 Corinthians 5. **We are fooling ourselves if we think we can stop believers from lusting by making a set of rules.** A person who wants to lust will simply find a way to lust that is within "the rules" or develop a clever way to secretly violate those rules.

We also agree that men and women should make a "covenant with their wardrobe" and not to dress in a sexually provocative manner. Some may object to this, raising the question, "Shouldn't I be free to dress as I want, and if someone lusts after me, isn't it their fault?" Others may ask "How can a person know they are dressing in a provocative manner?" The most common excuse I have heard is: "I do not want to dress provocatively, but I am simply trying to "dress according to the current style." The issue is further complicated by the fact that there is no agreement on what is provocative among various cultures: In some Arab cultures, a woman without a veil is considered provocative. Other cultures require that arms and legs be covered. Some jungle-dwelling tribes require that only a loin-cloth be worn—for both men and women.

Again, the answer to these questions does not lie in trying to specify a "righteous dress code." What is needed, is for people to understand the problems with dressing provocatively. Women who do so are much more likely to be attacked by molesters, rapists, and murderers. I personally know someone who survived such an attack, then concluded on her own that she needed to drastically change her style of dress. Men can have a similar problem. They need to avoid provocative dress in order to avoid the type of woman described in Proverbs 5.

Furthermore, single people really hurt themselves when they dress "sexy", thinking it will help them find a good mate. Often, all they do is attract someone who "wants to mess around", not someone who wants a life-long commitment. Even if a marriage does occur, lust is a terrible basis for a marriage. People seeking a marriage partner should look for someone with similar religious beliefs and compatible interests and goals. Few marriages fail because one person does not look "sexy" enough for the other. Lots of them fail because people were infatuated by appearance and their infatuation caused them to overlook serious problems with character and commitment.

Now that you understand **why** you should not dress to provoke lust in others, how do you do it? Obviously, tight or skimpy clothes tend to attract others' attention. Some styles or brands of clothing are simply considered "sexy" by most people. Avoid them. If being currently fashionable is important to you, wear styles and brands that are considered current, but not "sexy". Some do exist. **The ultimate way a person should judge how they are dressing is by the attention they attract.** If you receive whistles, exclamations or sexually oriented comments from people who do not even know you, you need to drastically change to attract less attention. If you receive such comments from people who do know you, you should still change to some degree. This does not mean that you need to be "wall flower" or unfriendly. It means that when you meet people, they should want to look at your face and talk to you, not primarily look at your clothes or your body.

The Eternal is not mocked. If people try to dress or act as "sexy" as the Bible allows, they will reap what they sow. We should want to live a life pleasing to the Eternal because His way is good for us, not because He makes us do it.

—NSE

Unbelievable Men Vs. Women

LETTER:

August 14, 1997

Dear Norman and Marleen,

I finally finished reading the article "Men vs. Women? No, Men & Women Together!" (July 1997 SN) and must speak out about how I felt while reading it. Almost every time I read the letter portion, my stomach would turn and I would shake my head in disbelief that I hope some not most Christian men can actually think and believe this way. If it wasn't for the response portion, I do not think I could have finished the article.

If women are the way these two men describe them to be—God help us! If men are the way these two men think—God help us! If women believe men think this way—God help us!

I wonder if these two men are married and have two good, obedient, submissive women at their sides. If so, I would like to read an article by these two women telling their story, and how much they love and adore their loving husbands who's mindset of women are the way they describe.

I am not married, but I know my mother is not like this, I know my sisters are not like this and I hope that if I ever get married it would be with a woman that will lovingly submit to my loving, godly authority, but will not submit to my evil, satanic human nature of totalitarian rulership.

I want my wife to be an independent thinker, not one who would wait for me to command her to do everything she needs to do so as to be under my submission.

I thank God that He has given me grace and loves me enough not to think of me as these two men think of women and to still love me even when I do not fully submit to Him because of my human weaknesses that not only do I have but all humans—including women.

As long as we are humans, we cannot obtain a true marriage relationship with our mates because of our human nature that wars against us. The true marriage will come when we marry Christ, the perfect mate.

For now, we should be thankful God made us male and female and He said, "It was very good!!" And whatever God makes "very good" let no man say it is "very bad" for then we know not what we speak of.

May God help both men and women to become true Christians obedient to Him in every way, for when we obey God, there won't be a need to tell our wives to submit, for they have already learned to

submit to God. And there won't be a need to tell men to love their wives for they have already learned to love God. Love, not submission, is the fulfilling of the law.

Sincerely,

—Mr. Angel Gonzalez, New Jersey

RESPONSE: We published the article because we realized that many people do not believe that some men actually think that way. Also, we hoped to offer correction to men who do think that way.

It should be helpful to anyone who has a woman friend with a husband like that. If she tells you a story about her husband that is hard to believe, you can now realize that it might be true. Obviously, you would need additional proof to be sure.

We do not mean to single out men by this article—there are greatly deceived women, also. Proverbs 5 gives one description. We might have an article on the subject in a future issue.

—NSE

Men and Women Together!

LETTER: September 22, 1997
Dear Norm,

When reading the letters in *Servants' News* (Men and Women), I had to write to ask, are they single people? If not, I feel their married life cannot be very happy.

I love my husband and he loves me. We live as one. Sometimes, he makes the decisions and sometimes I do. It is give and take.

When we go on holiday or the Feast, we look at how much money we have. My husband usually picks two places, then gives me the chance. We make up our minds, then we go. Every other time its somewhere I have never been; each time we go seems to be better than the last.

In our house, it's give and take. We are too busy helping and caring for one another. We never have time to think who is the weaker or who should submit. We are one in God. (Mind you, I would say I was the weaker, but never get a chance to think about it. I trust my husband would say the same.) If I am out on my own, I tell my husband all about it, because I **want** to share it with him and vice versa.

May this letter help some people.

—United Kingdom

RESPONSE: We hope that it does help some people. When individuals have an emphasis on living a righteous life and serving others, it matters little who is the strongest or most competent.

—NSE

What Year is it Really?

LETTER: September 15, 1997
Dear Editor,

Thanks for the excellent publication, the *Servants' News*, which allows the scattered brethren an opportunity to express and share their thoughts with one another and to learn from one another.

Since there is a great interest among many brethren about the end of the age, and the coming of the Son of Man again to rule the earth and since there is a tendency to count times and years leading up to His Second Coming, by what calendar are we counting times? Surely not the Roman Calendar!

God originally gave as His calendar, and the Jews had it to determine the annual holy days and festivals. Why should it be any different now? The question I would like to ask is this: **What year are we in, according to the Hebrew Calendar?** Because if Christ's coming in the 6000th year, we are not there yet, are we? The Hebrew Calendar is different, containing an extra month every so often; I don't know the details. Then we are all younger, and we counted time wrongly. All the people in the Bible must have counted their ages according to the Hebrew Calendar. Can you answer these questions please? Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

—Paul Christophy, United Kingdom

RESPONSE: This is quite a good question. Fortunately, nearly all calendar systems base their "year" on the revolution of the earth around the sun, which always takes the same length of time. A year is equal to 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46.069 seconds. The figure used in the calculated Hebrew calendar was about 7 minutes longer than that, so the holy days are celebrated, on average, about 4.5 days later each thousand years, but no years have been "lost" because of this error.

The Jewish calendar contains 13 months in 7 out of 19 years. In 19 years, there will be 235 months. The average length of a Jewish month is about 29.53 days. By multiplying 235 by 29.53, we get 6940 days.

Our standard Gregorian calendar has 12 months every year, so in 19 years there are 228 months. The average length of our month is 30.44 days. By multiplying 228 by 30.44, we also get 6940 days!

We can see that after nineteen years, the calendars will come out the same. (This is where some interpreters of prophecy get the 19-year cycle—not directly from the Bible.)

With this past Feast of Trumpets, the Hebrew calendar began year 5758. The traditional talmudic interpretation is that Adam was born in year one. If this is true, then we have 242 more years to go until the end of the 6000 year period. However, many people dispute the Talmud's dating. Some say the calendar began a couple hundred years after Adam. Others feel that it is missing years since Adam.

Most people agree that we have an accurate chronology of the past 2000 years, but the further we go backward before this date, the more difficult things become. The question is, what date B.C. was Adam created. Some say 4000, some say 4004 (which means our 6000 years ends right now). Others say about 3970 which neatly puts our Savior's ministry at the end of 4000 years, and gives us about 34 more years until the end of 6000 years. Unfortunately, we have not seen any chronology of the world that was not based on a certain amount of assumption, speculation, or unverifiable evidence.

The entire emphasis of Scripture is not on calculating the return of our Messiah and getting ready just before He comes. We could die any time—our next waking thoughts would be facing him. The Bible tells us that we need to be ready now! "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing (Matt 24:44-46).

—NSE

History and the Jewish Calendar

LETTER: March 9, 1997
Mr. Edwards,

I thoroughly enjoyed your summary essay on the calendar which appeared in the first issue of "The Journal." It seems that we share like sentiments upon the matter.

I first became aware of the problem of postponements a number of years ago. My family would try to attend feast days with the CGI, but they were somewhat lax in getting the necessary information to us in a timely manner. I began to keep a record of the feast days in my locker at work, and calculated them each year when my vacation schedule had to be turned in. I simply went with the 29 and 30 day months for several years with everything falling into place quite nicely until about the fourth year. Then I ran into a

problem: my dates came up a day short of the Jewish calendar, and it had nothing to do with the intercalary month. So it is, that I was introduced to calendar manipulations.

But I really accepted that concept and made the decision to go with the Jewish calendar at that time. As far as the calendar goes, I am of the opinion that it is impossible to come up with one that will satisfy everyone. **Therefore, it is to our benefit to learn to accept each other in spite of those differences. It is futile to pretend that you have the only true calendar**, but nonetheless, that attitude seems to prevail among certain of our brethren.

It is also probable that the spiritual principle found in Romans 14 can have other applications. We like to point out that this chapter refers to food and fasting, and forget that the basic plea for tolerance and understanding which Paul advocates may transcend the particular matter of fasting on specific days.

It is an intriguing concept to look for **modern events happening on significant days of the Jewish calendar**. I can't help you much there, but I do have an interesting addition on the arrival of General Allenby in 1917. The following is from "Next Year in Jerusalem," (pp 146,147) by Robert Goldston:

"Early in the morning of the ninth, when the last Turk had departed, houses, caves, cellars and hovels discharged their occupants who rushed into the streets with excited shouts of triumph and relief. Mothers, sons, fathers and daughters, with all their kinfolk, fell on each other's necks, sobbing and laughing with joy at the deliverance. Exactly two thousand and eighty-two years ago to this day, in 165 B.C., when Judas Maccabeus recaptured the temple from the Seleucids, similar scenes must have been enacted...[Both were on Kislev 24 by the Jewish calendar, a day of restoration prophesied in Haggai 2:10,18.]

"On December eleventh, the commander-in-chief, accompanied by representatives of the Allies, made his formal entrance into Jerusalem..."

"The historic Jaffa Gate was opened, after years of disuse, for the purpose and he was thus enabled to pass into the Holy City...When the time came for the great and simple act of the solemn entry of General Allenby into Jerusalem...the inhabitants mustered courage to gather in a great crowd...Many wept for joy, priests were seen to embrace one another, but there were no theatricalities...The General

entered the city on foot and left it on foot, and throughout the ceremony no Allied flag was flown, while naturally no enemy flags were visible.

"A proclamation announcing that order would be maintained in all the hallowed sites of the three great religions, which were to be guarded and preserved for free use of worshippers, was read in English, French, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Russian, and Italian, from the terrace of the entrance to the citadel below the Tower of David. When this was done, the chief notables and ecclesiastics of the different communities who had remained in Jerusalem were presented to General Allenby. After this brief ceremony the commander-in-chief left the city by the Jaffa Gate..."

"After General Allenby had entered Jerusalem modestly on foot, many of the Arab rulers recalled their cherished prophecy-He who shall save Jerusalem and exalt her among the nations will enter the city on foot, and his name will be 'God, the Prophet'-Allah Nebi!" (from Major Raymond Savage's "Allenby of Armageddon")

It seems that God enjoys the little details that clue us into the fact that something relevant is happening; even to the **name** of the general to march into Jerusalem. Now either he influenced this man's entire life to be in that position at that time, or He foresaw that a man of that name would perform that deed, and inspired the Arab rulers to prophesy as much. Or is it just coincidence! Of course, General Allenby only typically fulfilled that role, but it is fascinating nonetheless.

I suspect that you will discover a number of interesting such "coincidences" as you probe into the relevance of historical events with the Jewish calendar. You should easily have enough for a good-sized article. Perhaps a book. I would be interested in how events in American history would appear in that format: July 4,1776; the ratification of the Constitution, etc. Please keep us informed of your progress. Or, if there **is** no connection, that would be useful to know as well.

Thanks again for a very balanced article which I believe correctly advises us to be non-judgmental in these matters.

—John Cady, New York

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for this interesting answer relating to the question in our article *Biblical Calendar Basics*. We agree completely with your idea of toleration on issues that are not simply understood from the Bible. We would not go as far as saying that the Biblical calendar is "unknowable," but we

can say that it is not clearly spelled out and that many hours of research are required for most people to reach any kind of workable conclusion.

We would like to do more research on significant events and when they occurred on various calendars, but our time is limited and it may be quite a long time before we get to it. We have had a few other letters sent to use with information along this line. If one of our readers would like to be a central clearing house for such information, verifying and organizing it, we would be happy to send it to them.

—NSE

Early HWA Information

LETTER:

June 4, 1997

Dear Norm,

You started a good thing-keep it up. Will send a card-we lost ours.

My wife and I go back to the Radio Church of God. Baptized in 1963. Dean Blackwell ordained me a deacon in 1966, and elder in 1969.

In 1993, I wrote the Church of God Seventh Day (CG7) in Denver to learn of HWA's affiliation with them. I also corresponded with John Kiesz before he died. John informed me that much of HWA's autobiography was incorrect. I learned this 30 years too late. It is important to know something about the origin of what you dedicate your life to! I'm sorry I didn't check up on HWA sooner.

Going back to 1926 helped me to allow God's spirit to lead me to understand what Paul meant by the yoke of bondage. Many people still worship HWA as much as Catholics do the "virgin" Mary.

It was a CG7's minister's wife who convinced Loma Armstrong to keep the Sabbath. She convinced Herbert. Herbert was a good advertising man. I believe God wanted him to promote the Church of God Seventh day, **but Herbert was more interested in promoting himself**. He wanted his own magazine by 1929 (see his autobiography). He claims he started the Radio Church of God and the Plain Truth magazine in 1934. Well, I met a lady at Kansas City CG7 visiting from Oregon. She moved to Oregon in 1934. In 1934-35-36-and 37, her church pastor in the CG7 was Herbert W. Armstrong. **His autobiography will not state this fact!** During 1933,34,35,36, he wrote articles stating that he was holding up the western front for the Church of God Seventh Day. Herbert W. Armstrong "stole" as many people from CG7 as he could. **You reap what you sow**. As a result, dozens took

as many as they could when they left WCG. His 1939 government article was in protest to CG7 revoking his credentials in 1938 for his stubborn rebellion. (If HWA had submitted to the CG7's church government, there could not have been 50 splits off his organization.)

The Radio Church of God was not founded on the Rock (Christ). **It was founded on the advertising talent of HWA.** It probably needed to be dismantled, so when Joe Tkach dropped the Sabbath, God stepped back to watch it fall apart.

I find the Church of God Seventh Day to be a real haven. I hope thousands of people will learn more about this organization. It is not "dead" as I once believed. HWA learned the basics about the Sabbath and millennium here. I remember one booklet from CG7 that he took credit for. He was not known for giving but taking. That's why he taught the give/get principle. (The more you give, the more I get).

[personal information and several paragraphs about a completely different subject deleted.]

Your brother in Christ,

—Arlo Gieselman, Missouri

RESPONSE: We agree with nearly your entire letter. A few things we see differently: We are not sure that Herbert Armstrong was called to make the Church of God Seventh Day great, but more to show that the Eternal was great. The Church of God Seventh Day is not nearly as "dead" as the WCG claimed it was, but it has its difficulties, too. Because the CG7 does not have a strong central government, congregations vary greatly (like they do in Revelation 2 & 3). We personally know of congregations that are very small and have no outreach type of ministry at all. Some CG7 congregations have largely accepted the Trinity, eating unclean meats, heaven and hell, and other doctrines we do not accept.

On the other hand, there are many Church of God Seventh Day congregations that are full of life and many of our readers would enjoy attending. These congregations have good messages, good music, and preach the Gospel in their communities. Some keep the holy days. We highly recommend that brethren at least visit any nearby CG7 congregation.

We agree that far too much emphasis was placed on Herbert Armstrong in the Worldwide Church of God, though we never heard of anyone praying to him as Catholics pray to Mary. It used to sound nice to say we ought to "honor God's servant" or "honor the man who God is

working through." But the reality of the situation was that people began to believe that anything he said was somehow approved by the Eternal—even if it apparently conflicted with scripture. It should have been obvious to people from books such as *1975 In Prophecy* and other literature that **Herbert Armstrong's Statements were not all inspired.** Once we saw that, we should have been wise enough to realize that we need to check everything he said. I have to acknowledge that I did not have such wisdom at that time—I went along with many others.

The booklet you are referring to is *Has Time Been Lost?* The Worldwide Church of God published it under its own copyright for many years. The Church of God Seventh Day published it also. At one point, the WCG threatened to sue CG7 if they would not stop publishing it. The CG7 responded with documents showing that they were publishing the booklet as far back as the 1920's.

Herbert Armstrong copied most of the information and some text for *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy* from J. H. Allen's *Judah's Scepter and Joseph's Birthright* without giving him credit. We hope to produce a paper on this in the future. It is especially difficult when we see that Herbert Armstrong promoted these works as his own.

We have also spoken with John Kiez and others who knew Herbert Armstrong in his early years. They paint him as a zealous man, but one with many faults. **It was a serious mistake for him to take so much credit and glory to himself.** I have read David Robinson's *The Tangled Web* which makes many serious allegations against Herbert Armstrong. I have first-hand knowledge of some of the events in the book and independent confirmation of other events from trusted friends. I know of nothing in the book that is **untrue**, though the most serious problems he discusses have so few living witnesses (zero in some cases) that I cannot prove them one way or the other.

On the other hand, we must say that Herbert Armstrong did much to teach true doctrines to many people—doctrines that many "Christians" did not want to hear. Furthermore, the Eternal worked directly with many people who were first exposed to Bible truth through Armstrong's writings. **God never works through perfect humans, because there are not any. That is why we should not place our confidence in any man.**

We are sending you a copy of Richard Nickels' brief biography of Herbert Armstrong. We believe it is a relatively fair presentation, stating both the good and the bad.

It is most important, we believe, that everyone must realize that until the resurrection, Herbert Armstrong will never write another booklet or give another sermon—he served the Eternal in a unique way, **but that service is over and the Eternal has allowed Armstrong's organization to be largely dismantled.** We have learned from Herbert Armstrong, but now we are left with our Bible, our Savior, and our Father in Heaven—we ought to be about **His** business!

—NSE

Questions on Christianity

LETTER:
Servants' News,

July 18, 1997

1. Since there were so many savior gods who claimed to be born of a virgin, God's son, healed the sick, raised the dead, and were themselves resurrected from the dead, why do Christians think that Christ was somehow unique from the other christs?

RESPONSE: Where are the ancient copies of the writings by or about those other savior gods? What was their righteous teaching? Who followed them? Who prays in their name now, and receives miracles? Jesus (or Yeshua) of Nazareth is certainly unique in that his teaching has been the foundation of the most prosperous, powerful, and generous nations that the world has ever seen.

LETTER CONTINUES: 2. Since blood atonement is not the only atonement for sins, why didn't Jesus just take a bag of flour to the Romans and let them beat and crucify it? Flour was allowed in the Old Testament for atonement.

RESPONSE: Genesis 9:6 tells us that when a man's blood is shed (he was sinned against), the shedding of the sinner's blood is required. Flour was offered either along with other sacrifices or as a small token sacrifice—an animal, whose blood would be shed, was required for any significant sacrifice. But was the system of animal sacrifices the Eternal's plan from the beginning? No.

For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices (Jer 7:22).

For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more

than burnt offerings (Hos 6:6).

For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering (Ps 51:16).

Furthermore, we find that the Eternal did not always accept the burnt offerings of people who were sinning. They were a teaching tool, not a "deal" with the Eternal where if they made a sacrifice, he was utterly bound to forgive their sin. The sacrifices continued throughout Judah's history, yet He let them go into captivity. Notice Isa 1:11-15 and:

Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings (Amos 5:5)

The story of the Eternal telling Abraham to sacrifice his only son, a son whom had done nothing to deserve death, is a clear prophecy of the need for a guiltless human Savior to be a sacrifice.

LETTER CONTINUES: 3. Many pagan early mystery religions had bread (body of God) and wine (blood of God) ceremonies. They also had baptisms for the remission of sins, long before Jesus ever came. They also preached the 'Kingdom of God and Heaven'. So why do Christians think they are doing something special in baptism or Christ's Passover ceremony? It's not different than pagan ceremonies.

RESPONSE: Today, we can find numerous groups mixing the teaching of the Old Testament, New Testament, or both with all manner of other religious ideas. Jewish tradition indicates that bread and wine ceremonies go back to Abraham and Melchisedek (Gen 14:18). Immersing oneself in water (baptism) is found many places in the Hebrew Scriptures. There were numerous Old Testament promises for a kingdom ruled by the Eternal. The true worship of the Eternal certainly became mixed up with false religions (2 Kings 17:27-29). We have no way to know how many other times this happened prior to this scripture. We should not at all be surprised to find other ancient religions copying practices given by the Eternal.

LETTER CONTINUES: 4. Although Paul seems nice, he admits to using deceit to get his followers. Rom 3:7, 2Cor 12:16, 1Cor 9:20-23. Paul also teaches many Gnostic ideas: like celibacy is better than marriage, women should be quiet in church, that this evil world needs a savior God (a messenger from heaven with hidden truths from God, most men can't understand).

RESPONSE: All of your problem scriptures can be cleared up by reading the context. Paul is speaking sarcastically in

Rom 3:7; He says, "I am using a human argument" (NIV). In 2 Cor 12:16 he is also using sarcasm—the previous and next verses show how much he sacrificed for the Corinthians. If you read 1 Cor 9:19, you see that Paul "became all things to all men" to serve them as they were willing to be served, not to trick them. Paul never taught that celibacy was better than marriage, rather he said it was his gift. When he advised people not to marry, he made it very clear that it was his idea, and said that they were not sinning by marrying. The Greek for "silent" refers to a quieted crowd—women should not be chattering among themselves during the service (if you have spent a lot of time in "mother's rooms" of large congregations, you will know that this can be a problem). If this world does not need a Savior, then what does it need? If everyone sacrificed an animal or beat a bag of flour right now, would it suddenly be a better place? The nation of Israel had all of the laws of the Eternal and his direct guidance through the high priests and prophets—and they failed as a nation. We need the nature of the Eternal within us. I do not know of any place where Paul taught that salvation depends on difficult, secret knowledge.

LETTER CONTINUES: Paul, like Gnostics, feel there are two laws: one of flesh, one of spirit. Paul acts like Satan and God are at odds (not an OT teaching at all).

RESPONSE: Our Old Testament shows the Eternal and Satan "at odds." The very name Satan means "adversary" in Hebrew. Read the book of Job. There Satan is obviously allowed only to do what the Eternal lets him, but makes Job as miserable as he possible can. When the Eternal decides to restore Job's family and wealth, did he send Satan to do that good deed. No, He had to do it Himself. I cannot find one case in the Hebrew Scriptures where Satan does a positive, kind work!

LETTER CONTINUES: And Ebionites claim Paul was a liar and they followed Christ and were led by James. The question—how do Christians come to trust a man who never saw Christ in life, who claimed to see visions (not unlike Christians today) and who didn't lead all Christians like the NT seems to say?

—Jill Phillips, Texas

RESPONSE: The Eternal said that He usually speaks to men in dreams and visions (Num 12:6). The Bible has dozens of examples of such communication—Paul is not at all unusual. The New Testament and modern congregations are full of examples of factions forming

among believers. The very passage you quoted above (2Cor 12) is about people who were no longer listening to Paul. We should not be at all surprised that the Ebionites may have accepted some New Testament teachers and rejected others. We have many factions today that only accept certain parts of the Old or New Testaments.

You have also sent us long lists of books that are against Christianity and promised to find more if that was not enough. We could use the Internet to download a list of Books supporting Christianity, Atheism, Buddhism, Communism or other ideologies. Is the one with the longest book list the truth?

And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1Cor 2:4-5).

Paul did not say his words were the ultimate proof of his belief in Christ, but it was the Power of the Eternal. If you have never experienced His power to deliver us from sin and to live a righteous life, we encourage you to repent of your sins and ask for that power. If you do not believe His forgiveness and power are necessary or possible, then by all means do the best you can to live a righteous life from your understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures. Do good works, set a good example. But before you try to convince others that the New Testament is wrong, I recommend that you spend a lot more time studying the entire Bible, and pray for wisdom and understanding, so you do not make the rather obvious mistakes as above.

—NSE

Myron Martin Sabbath-Start Studies

*We have received nearly 100 pages of letters and articles from Myron Martin that attempt to show that the Sabbath begins at sunrise. Several issues or a large separate document would be required to communicate all of this information to our readers. **We disagree with much of it, so, we feel we would need to write many pages to refute those parts.***

We have exchanged a couple of letters with Myron Martin, showing him where we believe he is wrong. We have not taken time to respond to every point that he has made because of the sheer volume of them. On the other hand, he attempted to refute only a fraction of the few of the points that we made to him, and we do

agree with most of his responses. The following is an excerpt from his last letter:

EXCERPT FROM LETTER: Can you deny that my writings prompted the article by Herb Solinsky? [SN July 1997, p 3.] My main point, Norm, is that my opinion should not be suppressed because you disagree with it, let your readers make up their own minds, otherwise you are usurping the function of the Holy Spirit, to convict people of the truth.

—Myron Martin
Patriots of the Kingdom
PO Box 20004 CDO
Concord, Ontario L4K 4T1
Canada.

RESPONSE: Herb Solinsky began doing his research on the beginning and ending of a Biblical day many years ago in connection with calendar studies. He mentioned it to us at the Feast in 1996. Several people have sent us writings on the issue of when a day begins, so Herb began working on his article in May or June.

We believe it is possible to understand generally when to observe a Sabbath from just a few scriptures (Lev 23:32, Neh 13:19, Luke 4:31-40)—realizing that people thought they had to wait until after the Sabbath to carry the sick—John 5:10). But the issue becomes more complex when you take a clear scripture like Leviticus 23:32 and claim it applies to only the length of time we fast, not to the length of the Sabbath: **“It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.”** If we look into the meaning of the Hebrew for “celebrate” it is the word *shabbath*, with the stem *qual*. This form of the word is always translated as “rest” or “cease” [from working]. There is no question in our mind that the Hebrew is talking about the time we rest, not specifying a time for fasting that is different than the time for resting.

It would take hundreds of hours and dozens of pages to answer all what we believe are faulty arguments. This issue is now nearly as complex as the Passover issue. Actually, the two are inter-related—a whole new set of Passover theories are possible if one believes that the fourteenth of Nisan began and ended at sunrise. **One or more fairly large books would be required to cover everything.** We would like to write such books, but do not see how we will have time in the next five years.

Furthermore, we believe there are many issues more important than this. When I am judged, and are asked why I

kept an evening-to-evening Sabbath, I plan to cite the above three scriptures. If our Savior introduces many other complex scriptures to show that I was wrong, I can honestly repent and change. This is very different than doctrines such as Sunday-keeping or the Trinity for which there is virtually **no** valid scriptural support. Nearly all of the scriptures that talk about how we will be judged, refer to basic issues: did we help the poor, treat our brothers fairly, speak truthfully and acknowledge our Savior?

If I am deceived on the timing of the Sabbath and **if** your teaching is correct, I am confident that the Eternal will make a way for you to distribute it. I do not believe that I can, “usurp the work of the Holy Spirit.” Anyone who feels led to learn more about a Sabbath that begins at sunrise can write to your address, above.

This *Servants' News* issue was delayed several days simply because of the time taken to study and respond to your material. For now, I intend to postpone studies in this area in order to deal with other more vital issues.

—NSE

Answer to Stolen Truth Letter

LETTER:

August 5, 1997

Dear Norm:

Greetings from Pasadena, where the thermometer hit 109 yesterday. I am writing you this brief note since you said you would welcome a response to Glen Myers' letter which you printed in *Servants' News*. I appreciate your offer and have decided that I should respond, rather than simply ignore the matter and let it rest, lest some of your readers “assume” that the accusations Glen made were true. So I thank you for letting me set the record straight.

In his letter to you, Glen states: “Dankenbring has taken my article and apparently pulled a Herbert Armstrong by making everyone think that Christ revealed this new knowledge to him personally, without ever giving anyone else the credit. Please let your readers know, that William Dankenbring did not come up with this new knowledge on his own, but has taken my article and my reasons and published them in his Prophecy Flash magazine as being his own!!! Isn't stealing against the law???”

First of all, Glen is simply incorrect. 1) I first read his letter (he calls it an article) in January, 1997, which gave many apparent reasons why there seemed to be a “problem” with the traditional understanding of the chronology of the judgement and cru-

cifixion of Christ. At the time I skimmed his letter and laid it aside, hoping to deal with it later. It reminded me of the fact that about twenty five years ago (around 1968) I wrote an article in *The Good News* on “Christ in the Passover”, in which I quoted the *Berkeley Version*, or *Moffatt*, which said that it was about “NOON” when Pilate finally condemned Christ. Robert Boraker, head of Personal Correspondence Department in Bricket Wood, England, at that time, wrote me and inquired if this was “new understanding”, since the Church then taught that John was using “Roman time” when he wrote that this event occurred “about the sixth hour” (John 19:14). At that time, I studied into the “timing problem,” noted that it seemed difficult to have Jesus appearing before Annas the High Priest, then Caiaphas, during the night, then the “next morning” before the full Sanhedrin, then before Pilate the first time, who then sent him to King Herod, who sent him back to Pilate, and this last and final appearance before Pilate was thought to have been “about the sixth hour”—meaning 6:00 AM—according to the Worldwide Church of God understanding at that time. The Church (Meredith, Hoeh, etc) said John used “Roman time.” However, as the pressure of many other things crowded into my time, I put this question on the back burner, and let it slide—until Glen's letter reminded me of the apparent “problem.”

In the meantime, Ray Murphy of Monrovia, California, about three years ago told me about a book he had inadvertently picked up at the Monrovia Library titled *Jesus Christ our Passover*, written by Victor Paul Wierwille, published by American Christian Press, The Way International, New Knoxville, Ohio 45871—a book of 527 pages length, including index. He said this fellow had some fascinating new information about Jesus' final week. At the time, I did not read the book, but intended to get around to it later. Well, after being reminded of the “problem” in the chronology by Glen Myers' letter, I checked with Ray, got hold of the book by Wierwille, in April of this year, and read it. It was indeed fascinating. Wierwille went through the last week of Christ, step by step, day by day, spending about one chapter on each day, showing the activities that occurred, and proved—at least to my satisfaction—that indeed, not only was there a problem with the WCG's traditional explanation of events, but that they were WRONG—ie, John was not using Roman time at all, and Moffatt and other translations were right in saying

Jesus appeared before Pilate the final time about NOON. Since He was already nailed to the stake about 9:00 AM on Nisan 14, this plainly meant He had to appear before Pilate for His final sentencing the previous DAY—at noon on Nisan 13. I considered this to be a “blockbuster” new idea. I studied the book carefully, and found that Wierwille covered the subject in a very thorough and convincing manner.

Passover Correction

On page 6 of the May 1997 issue we stated that we wanted to avoid writing on the Passover timing until we could do more study and write an in-depth paper. We still believe that is the only effective way to handle the issue! We published Glen Myers' letter primarily because of the issue of “truth stealing,” but it certainly touched on the Passover. It was only fair to publish Bill Dankenbring's response.

While the subject of Passover has surfaced, we would like to correct an obvious error we made on page 14 of our January 1997 issue. We said that it would take some time to pluck and clean quail, but several people with personal experience have informed us that it is very easy to prepare quail for eating in a short period of time. **Quail can be easily skinned rather than plucked.** However, this fact makes little change in the point of the article. It is still difficult to interpret Exodus 16 as saying that the Hebrew *ba erev* (the time the quail came) is sunset, and that *ben ha arbayim* (the time the quail were eaten) is dark. In the spring of the year in Israel, the twilight period is only about 30 minutes. Starting a wood fire and cooking quail all in 30 minutes is not much time. It is theoretically possible that they kept fires smoldering all day on the Sabbath, but that would use a lot of wood—something scarce in a wilderness. We are still of the conclusion that this and many other Bible verses show that *ba erev* sometimes means “sunset”, and sometimes refers to the time from noon until dark. Further, *ben ha arbayim* (the time the Passover was slain) appears to be a time between noon and dark.

—NSE

In his letter, Glen Myers had reminded me of the difficulties in thinking Jesus made all His appearances before the high priests, the full Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again, all before “6:00 AM.,” Roman time. But Glen Myers only pointed out *problems* with the chronology, which I

was already aware of. He did not bring up or refute the problems posed by the scriptures in Mark and Luke which implied that the day when Jesus told His disciples to prepare the passover was “the day of unleavened bread, when the passover was killed” (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7). Myers did not even mention these two scriptures, which at the time I believed were the “coup de grace” for any theory that the last supper could have occurred prior to Nisan 14, the day the passover was killed.

However, in his book, Wierwille does spend a whole chapter dealing with these scriptures, and shows plainly that the Greek word for DAY here is *hemera* and can mean a 12-hour “day”, a 24 hour day, or a general period of time, such as “the day of vengeance,” “day of the Lord”, or “day of adversity” etc, or even a “thousand-year day” (II Pet 3:8-10). I found this to be very exciting, a thrilling discovery, which finally “solved” the whole puzzle and every difficulty of the chronology of the “last week of Jesus Christ.” That is why, in my own article on the subject in the May-June issue of *Prophecy Flash*, I referred to this as an earth-shaking, blockbuster, tidal wave of new truth which would shake up the conventional explanations and nonsensical reasonings which men have used, in the past, to support their erroneous theories.

Therefore, I most certainly did not “steal” any ideas from Glen Myers. In fact, in a personal letter I thanked him for reminding me of the problem with the chronology of the crucifixion, but apparently he became offended and accuses me of “stealing” his ideas. Nonsense! Most of my article was based on my own cautious and careful research, guided in no small measure by the influence of Victor Paul Wierwille's 527 page book on that very subject. If anything, I owe a debt of gratitude to Wierwille, but the truth is, I believe GOD in heaven is the one who deserves the credit for this “new revelation” and “new understanding.”

Herbert Armstrong used to say that it is ten times more difficult to *unlearn an error* than simply to learn “new truth”. How true that is! I have found, since writing on this subject, that some people have studied it and accept it as wonderful and exciting new truth which helps them to understand and appreciate even more the pain and suffering that Christ went through, for us. Some others however, have condemned me roundly for daring to publish this, and one has even accused me of “deliberately” doing this in order to do away with the whole concept of a Nisan 14 “Last

Supper”, or “Passover.”

It is sad how some people react to new truth, new knowledge, and how impervious and impenetrable their minds have become. Rather than being open-minded, with the faith and innocence of a child, they have become adamant like stone, and resist the truth to the point of hurling false accusations at the “truth bringer.” I personally, take no credit for this new truth. I merely lay it out there, and ask people to study it carefully, sincerely, with an objective and open mind—and not to allow the cobwebs of confusion caused by previous teachings to cloud and obscure the truth. To me, this new truth is like the crystal clear water of a mountain spring, uncontaminated and unpolluted—pure and fresh, with no ulterior motives or hidden agendas attached to it. People can accuse me of whatever they want—and some have. But the truth will win out in the end (Luke 10:21).

At any rate, I feel sorrow for Glen Myers, who seems to feel so unappreciated that he thinks he has to slap and falsely accuse some of the few friends he may have left. His overall attitude toward others seems to be so hostile, full of anger, and distrust. I pray for him, that God will help him overcome his gigantic “chip” he is carrying around on his shoulder, and forget the past, and begin to stress the positive things in His relationship with God; because, although he may feel bitterly betrayed by many men, including many ministers in the past, we have all been “there”, and many of us have “suffered many things, of many men.” This is part of the “walk” Christ has called us to (Luke 14:26-27.). I chalk all the “past sufferings” we have gone through, in our previous associations and churches, up to “experience”. As the apostle Paul wrote, “And not only so, but we *glory in tribulations* also: knowing that tribulation worketh *patience*, and *patience*, *experience*; and *experience*, *hope*: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the *love* of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom 5:3-5).

Sincerely,

—William F. Dankenbring

PO Box 292, Altadena, CA 91003

RESPONSE: Thank you for giving your perspective on this issue. I think it is a good example of how we all need to communicate more effectively. Matthew 18 tells us “go to our brother” first before complaining about difficulties in a public way. When we get an idea or a lot of information from a single source, we should give credit.

It is good that you mentioned your

source was a book by Victor Paul Wierwille. That way, people can check him out, and find that he was the leader of a hierarchical, controlling cult-like group called "The Way" (not to be confused with *The Way* newsletter published by Jack Lane). The Way has some similarities to the Worldwide Church of God in that it has done a lot of teaching of right Bible principles and rejected some erroneous mainstream Christian doctrine. But, it also considered itself the one true church and dis-fellowshipped members who did not thoroughly support headquarters. Of interest, we had someone visit our Sabbath service that used to work at the Headquarters of The Way, but left to form independent fellowships after seeing the corruption in the organization. We have two separate witnesses that they have a "doctrine" that permits their high-level leaders to have sex with other men's wives. That does not automatically make Victor Paul Wierwille's teaching false, but it does at least make me wonder whether he was seeking for truth, or simply seeking for distinctive doctrine to keep his followers from straying into other organizations.

The idea that Jesus' Last Supper was more than one day before his death was something I never considered before. **I learned some things from your article** and found it marginally plausible. Reading it caused me to think of other possibilities—such as: is it possible that Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) are describing a different "supper" than John? (Most of the events described by John are not in the Synoptics and vice versa. However, such a theory would require a 24-hour break somewhere in the middle of John 13 or our Savior identifying Judas as the betrayer on two separate nights.)

Nevertheless, **I cannot accept the conclusions in your article.** The major scriptural problem solved by your thesis is the meaning of "the sixth hour" mentioned in John 19:14. But your theory creates many more scriptural problems. Below, I list the major difficulties I found with the article by page number:

page 3: I failed to see how the article was a "bombshell" that would "completely change your life." It is Biblical research with some impact on practice and doctrine. Your writings showing that the Passover was not kept early on the 14th have much more impact than this does—they change the time that people actually observe the Passover. For those who believe in a late-14th Passover, it really matters little whether His last supper was one, two, or more days before the Passover. They still keep the Passover at the same time. Both you and I understand from 1 Corinthians 11 that bread and wine can be

taken "when you come together as a church" (verse 18). Since no specific time or frequency is set by the Bible for this partaking of bread and wine, it is hard to imagine our Savior condemning it on any specific day if it is done with the proper attitude.

Pages 13-14. Your article stated "it would seem LUDICROUS to BEGIN preparation for the Passover as Late as Nisan 14", and also stated "this 'preparation' also took at least four or five hours". How is there any difficulty with doing half a day's work in one day? The original Passover was prepared in haste—that is why the bread was unleavened. This is not a valid reason to say our Savior must have told them to prepare for the Passover days in advance.

Pages 15-16. The Bible is not clear exactly which days some events occurred. Some of the dates that you set are simply assumptions.

Page 20. Your article states that they ate the last supper in Bethany, yet the room that they were told to eat in is described as "in the city" (Matt 26:18). The Greek for "city" is *polis* (from which we get "metropolis") which tends to refer to a larger place. This is demonstrated in Matthew 21:17 where both with words "city" and "Bethany" are used—the "city" there is obviously Jerusalem. Also, your **explanation of John 18:1 is difficult.** It shows that Jesus went from the last supper over the Kidron valley to the Garden of Gethsemane. It is most likely that he went from Jerusalem, eastward to the garden. Your explanation that they crossed the Kidron twice is hard to accept as it would be a much longer route and we would have to ask "why did John write about one crossing but not the other?" Your other explanation, that the Garden of Gethsemane might be on the west side of the Kidron is also difficult as the wall of Jerusalem borders the west side of the Kidron for over a mile—a garden inside a walled city would not be a quiet place to retreat and pray, and there is essentially no room for one outside the wall.

Pages 23-25. Your article describes numerous events as taking longer than they need to. Also, you state that Pilate would not get up or hold court before sun-up. Pilate's job and life depended on his maintaining order in Jerusalem. Passover was the time when most trouble occurred. Dealing with a man who some claimed to be a Jewish king or Messiah would be his top priority.

Pages 33-34. The idea that our Savior suffered for 40 hours may sound good to numerologists, **but no specific prophecy says that.** Furthermore, claiming that Jesus was beaten by Romans for 21 hours is com-

pletely contrary to John 18:28-36. It unquestionably says that **Pilate did not want to kill Jesus, either before or after the scourging.** He wanted to "chastise Him and let Him go" (Luke 23:22). **Does it make any sense that Pilate would send Jesus to be beaten for 21 hours and survive?** Further, Mark 15:44 states: "Pilate marveled that He was **already** dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time." How could Pilate be amazed if he had ordered a 21-hour beating? It is obvious that Pilate ordered the scourging, crown of thorns, mocking, etc. to make Jesus look like a harmless pitiful person to which the crowd would say "He can't do anything" and they would then not mind letting Him go. Furthermore, John 18:28 specifically says that Jews did not want to enter the Praetorium so they would not be defiled so they could eat the Passover. **If this was more than a day before the Passover, they would have been able to enter the Praetorium** and just be unclean until evening (according to my understanding of their cleanliness laws). Also, Pilate spoke to a crowd before and after the scourging. Are we to believe that the crowd stayed and slept there for 21 hours? Why were there no instructions given to them to come back and see if He was still alive tomorrow? Furthermore, it is just unreasonable to conclude that all four gospel writers give such a detailed description of all the events and do not even mention our Savior surviving a 21-hour beating without a broken bone. These 21 hours would have elapsed within a single sentence in Matthew 27:26 and Mark 15:15.

Bill, I found some of the other news items and articles in the letter very interesting and helpful. I encourage you to continue your study and writing, but I also encourage you to write more from the perspective of "is this scenario possible" rather than your title *Huge Tidal Wave of New Truth Smashes Icons of Error and Assumption! Jesus' Last Week on Earth Revealed!* Our Messiah is the one who reveals things (Rev 1:1). You did not claim that He revealed this to you, but that it was your own understanding of the Bible based largely on Wierwille's book. It will not hurt you to say that some or all of this article was a mistake. The "seven churches" in Revelation 2 and 3 did not have perfect doctrine, yet they were all His congregations. The hundreds of Sabbatarian groups today do not have perfect doctrine. I do not have perfect doctrine. But we will not be judged by the perfection of doctrine that our group holds. We will be judged by what we individually do with what we have been given.

Shalom.

—NSE

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many as want it at the lowest practical cost. The loose-leaf format used by *Servants' News* and most of the literature below is inexpensive and makes copying easy (most literature is public domain). You might wish to hold the pages together with a 3-ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

Highly Recommended Items Listed Every Issue:

Mature Literature

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.

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.)

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

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman S. Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King

James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today's congregations.

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 of God" history.

Study Resources and Information

The Christian Beacon Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter of encouraging articles for Sabbatarians.

Giving and Sharing Order Form by Richard Nickels. 3 pages. Has many excellent free items, low prices on hard-to-find religious books, and fine literature on floppy disk.

The Journal: News of the Churches of God edited by Dixon Cartwright. One free sample issue. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups. 16 pages.

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

Servants' News Complete Literature List & Index, 30 pages.

"Lessons" from page 4

describing the appeal process, another told him that no such document existed.

The five local board members and families continue to attend both services, hoping that a means of keeping the congregation together could be found. Don Hooser continued to give sermons based around the theme "good fences make good neighbors." As we go to press, the UCG-AIA group found another hall to meet in, so the groups will divide up the sound system and other equipment and become separate: about 25 with UCG-AIA and 50 (including the Gully family) with the independent group.

Lesson for everyone: The pastor did not play the main role in this situation, but rather the local board and the whole congregation, which was informed every step of the way. Most of the neutral people (those who were neither pro-UCG-AIA nor pro-independent) decided to attend the independent congregation after seeing how UCG-AIA management dealt with them.

Info: Ben Mauldin, 254-982-4500.

Kansas City Restarts 3rd Time

For many years, the four Kansas City WCG congregations were close-knit, participating in many combined activities. As new doctrines came rolling out of WCG headquarters, two congregations pushed to accept them, two disagreed. Over 300 brethren left to start an independent congregation. A WCG minister agreed to become the pastor of the group and

promised that he not join any other group without discussions with the board. However, one Sabbath early in 1995, the pastor simply announced that they were now a Global Church of God congregation. About 100 members, including most of the group's organizers, found this and other decisions unacceptable, and started a new independent congregation. The newly formed United Church of God agreed to provide a pastor to handle spiritual issues, and agreed to let their board handle the physical issues. Two years later, the new UCG-AIA pastor insisted "If he does not have the right to over-rule any decision of the board, he cannot pastor the church."

Because of this and other issues, the same organizers have started an independent congregation for the third time—one this one will stay independent. About 40 members are attending. They used their new freedom to combine Feast of Trumpets services with a Church of God Outreach

Ministries group—70 people attended. They are planning more combined activities with other Sabbath-keeping groups—even the ones from which they split away. A great effort is being made to avoid grudges over past problems.

A combination of live messages and tapes are used in their services. A community outreach ministry is being planned.

Lesson for ministry: Ministers should be prepared to keep promises made to individuals and organizations, or else they should not make them. How can a group of people sit and learn righteousness from someone who, in their view, does not always practice it?

Lesson for members: You can still maintain friendships with other Sabbath-keepers even though you are in different groups. It may not always be easy-going, but do not give up.

Info: Leonard Cacchio, 816-524-2442.



If You Do or Don't Want to Contact Scattered Brethren, Read This

The next *Servants' News* will contain another Scattered Brethren Contact article (see *SN* Dec. 1995 and Sept-Oct 1996). We will list the cities, states and countries of the *Servants' News* readership. Interested readers may then write letters or postcards to individuals in cities of interest to them, stamp them, pack them up, and send them to us. We will add the appropriate address and mail them. By using this method, we do not give your name and address to anyone, but they can still write to you. If you receive a letter and are interested in fellowshiping, you can respond. If not, throw the letter away.

If you do not want to receive any "Scattered Brethren Contacts," please contact us by November 19 and we will not list your city in the next issue.