

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 1, No. 5 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be August 1995

The Sound of a DIFFERENT DRUMMER

What if one day you heard some nice sounds. You looked out a window of your house and saw a parade going by. The parade was marching to good music. The people in the parade were singing and dancing, smiling and obviously having a good time. What assumptions could you draw from the activity? Certainly, one assumption would be that becoming part of the parade was desirable.

You leave your house and family and join up with the happy group. At times it's difficult to walk so fast, but it's so good to be in this parade. You learn their words and start to sing. You click your heels together and dance. Ah, this is what you have been waiting for.

After a while, you see up ahead that the parade leaders have turned down a broad side road. You know where this road leads! You have been down this road before. It leads to a high cliff overlooking the ocean and mighty crashing waves on rocks at the base of the cliff.

The parade continues toward the ocean. You figure everyone is going to gather at the edge of the cliff. Together, all will watch a beautiful sunset from the high vantage of the cliff, a sunset heralding wonderful future days. You sing loudly, all the time straining to see what's going on up front. Some people at the head of the parade seem to have disappeared. The music and dance continues. It's such great fun! Familiar

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TEN REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT LEAVE THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

After reading several issues of *Servants' News*, I have concluded that while you may be making an honest effort to remain unbiased and neutral, you are, in reality, presenting a "one sided" view that tends to support and encourage *leaving* the WCG.

Don't get me wrong. **I am totally against the changes made in the WCG in the last several years.** They *are* heresy. But I am also strongly *against* leaving the WCG! I realize my position doesn't make sense to most people—especially those who have already left the WCG. But there are clear, rational—*biblical*—reasons why I and many others feel this way.

So, how about a little "equal time"? After all, you do want to represent all sides don't you?

The fact is, there are numerous small WCG groups scattered around the world which are "hanging on"—standing firm *against* the false teaching, yet refusing to *leave*. Why? Because we are convinced that God is working out a great purpose in the WCG—that he is allowing this trial to help us all get ready for Christ's return. The "work" is finished; now all that is left is for the bride to "make herself ready" (see Rev 19:7). That is what this trial is all about.

Editor's note: The Bible tells us that we are to be working when our Master returns (Luke 12:35-48, Matt 24:45-51. Herbert Armstrong wrote in his last letter: "The greatest work lies yet ahead." We know of

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Where does our Father expect us to fellowship?

We present two approaches to this vital question of our day.

At left, an analogy with which we largely agree. Its point is made in a very memorable way.

At right, a different but sincere understanding with certain scriptural difficulties that we note.

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Here a Little, There a Little

One Ark or Two?

The search for the Ark of the Covenant has been the stuff that books, movies, and fraudulent religion has been made out of. *Servants' News* has encountered several people that claim to know the current location of the ark. As you might guess, the person who "knows" is always waiting on a "special revelation" before they make the secret known. (But while we wait, they usually have a book or video for sale telling about how they made the find, but not giving enough detail that you can independently verify their claims.)

It was recently brought to my attention that there are probably two arks. The first was made by Moses: "So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand...Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the Lord commanded me" (Deut 10:3,5).

The second ark was made later by Bezaleel, the master craftsmen, with the tabernacle of worship: "Then Bezaleel made the ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits was its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside... (Exodus 37:1-2).

Rashi and other highly respected Hebrew scholars agree that the language used cannot mean that Moses actually used Bezaleel to make the ark or vice versa. There were two arks.

So now archeologists and adventurers have two arks to look for. The book of Maccabees (found in Bibles that include the Apocrypha) contains information from a document supposedly dating back to the destruction of the first temple: "the prophet gave orders that the Tent of Meeting and the ark should go with him. Then he went away to the mountain from the top of which Moses saw God's promised land. When he reached the mountain, Jeremiah found a cave-dwelling; he carried the tent, the ark,

and the incense-altar into it, then blocked up the entrance.... 'The place shall remain unknown,' he said, 'until God finally gathers his people together and shows mercy to them...'" (2 Mac 2:4-7). While our relationship with our Father should not be influenced by these things, the discovery of such an artifact would send millions of people to their Bibles asking questions that they never had before. Are we ready to help teach them?

Reaching Someone

George McGovern lost by a landslide in the US presidential election in 1972. Twenty years later, he had a meeting in an airport with former president Richard Nixon.


McGovern told Nixon that he, McGovern, was thinking of running for president again. Nixon, who had the life experience of being in seven presidential elections, told McGovern, "If I were you I would ask myself two questions: **1) Do I have a message? and 2) Is anybody going to listen?**"

George McGovern said that was the best political advice he had ever received. He also didn't run again!

As people are thinking about how they might preach the Gospel, they need to ask themselves the very same questions. "Do you have a message? And is anybody going to listen?"

—Excerpted from "Steve" on CompuServe

Pen Pals

Jack Nevins, C/O Angel Gonzalez, 700 Blair Road, Carteret, NJ, 07008. Single, Interested in fellowshiping with God's people, especially those who are open to the information that *Friends of the Brethren* publishes. To have Bible studies and sabbath services free from "Churches of God" influences and to be free to be independent thinkers and Christians sharing our faith with one another but not judging nor condemning our differences. 

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

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

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Why I Observe the SABBATH

Because ours is a non-Sabbath-keeping world, one who observes the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath is continually asked, “Why?” Volumes have been written on this subject, volumes that give numerous proofs from Scripture, history, and logic—volumes that answer all objections. But when all the words are boiled down, there are seven basic and compelling reasons for keeping the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath.

Reason 1: The Sabbath Was Given at Creation

The Sabbath was instituted by God’s own example on the seventh day of creation week.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (Gen 2:2-3)

How Significant!

The very God of the universe chose to cease from His labor—not because He was tired (Isa 40:28), but because He wanted to set an example for all mankind. He specifically blessed and made holy the seventh day Sabbath, a day of ceasing, well over two millennia before the time of Moses and the Old Covenant.

While the normal Hebrew word for Sabbath, *shabbâth* (שַׁבָּת), is not used here, “rest” is used twice which is the Hebrew *shâbath* (שָׁבַת). These words are so similar that only the

most rebellious Hebrew readers could claim there is no connection. Exodus 20:11 proves the Sabbath was made at creation:

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy.

Jesus Himself, during His earthly ministry, declared that the Sabbath was made for man (that is, mankind), not just for the Hebrews (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath was not a mere Mosaic statute given only to Israel under the Old Covenant. It was set apart at the beginning, as a memorial of God’s creative power; it was ordained by God’s own example as a blessing for all mankind. This reason alone should be sufficient for those who seek to do God’s will.

An interesting footnote to the early origin of the Sabbath and its universal application is that in many languages around the world, ancient and modern, the name for the seventh day of the week is a variation of the word “Sabbath.”

Reason 2: The Sabbath is Part of the Decalog

Usually, when I am asked in casual conversation why I keep the Sabbath, I respond, “for the same reason I honor my parents!” It is an answer that cannot be easily dismissed because both Sabbath-keeping and honoring parents are required by the same law, the Ten Commandments (literally in Hebrew the “Ten Words” or “Ten Sayings”). And it’s a rare Christian who will speak negatively toward this law, even though most ignore the Fourth Commandment, which states:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work...” (Ex 20:8-10).

The importance of the Ten is shown by the fact that God gave them with His own voice and inscribed them in stone with His own finger. He must have chosen very carefully the ten spiritual precepts to be included in this law, which was to serve as a constitution of sorts for the nation of Israel. Keep in

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Dual-Purpose Article

If you are still debating whether or not you need to keep the Sabbath, this article should help you make up your mind. For those already convinced of this truth, this article covers most of the essential scriptures and facts that we should know to teach others. If you would like more extensive information on the Sabbath, it is available inexpensively from *Giving and Sharing*, PO Box 100, Neck City, MO 64849 or Bible Sabbath Association, Rt 1 Box 222 Fairview, OK 73737.

mind, these were not new laws; they all go back to Creation, though they probably were not codified as ten commandments. For example, murder, lying, and adultery are all condemned from the beginning (Gen 4:8-16; 20:3-6; 39:9, cf. Rom 5:12-14). And as we've already seen, the Sabbath originated at Creation. Very possibly the Israelites did not observe it while they were slaves in Egypt, but when God gave them the Fourth Commandment, He was not introducing some new law. In fact, He had begun reminding them of the Sabbath some weeks earlier when He sent the manna only six days each week (Ex 16).

In the New testament, the laws from the Ten are consistently upheld as reflecting God's will for mankind. Jesus reinforced them (Mark 10:17-19). So did Paul and James (Rom 2:13,21; 7:7-14,21; Jas 2:8-12). Even most modern Christians esteem the Ten Commandments as God's moral code, yet they ignore the Fourth or somehow believe it was changed to Sunday. Some argue that only nine of the ten are repeated, at least in principle, in the New Testament, that the Sabbath commandment is not. Yet Jesus' statement "The Sabbath was made for man" certainly repeats the principle of the Fourth Commandment (Mark 2:27).

The Ten Words (Commandments) continue to stand as God's will for all mankind. The seventh-day Sabbath is part of that law. Those who claim God as their Father, should obey His laws, including the Ten, including the Fourth Commandment!

Reason 3:

Jesus Upheld the Sabbath

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus observed the Sabbath. Luke records:

He went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read (Luke 4:16).

On many occasions Jesus incurred the wrath of the Pharisees because he did not live according to their man-made Sabbath regulations. He healed

on the Sabbath; He allowed his disciples to shell out kernels of grain to eat; He told a man to pick up his bed roll—all contrary to the Pharisees' traditions. But never once did He speak negatively about the Sabbath itself. On the contrary, He observed it and showed in a positive way how it should be kept; He proclaimed Himself Lord of it.

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28).

Jesus was indeed Lord of the Sabbath. He showed by His example how it was to be kept as a blessing for mankind, as a day of freedom and delight. He showed that doing good, taking care of animals, handling emergencies, shelling out grain to eat, were all permissible on this day of rest (Matt 12:11-12; Luke 14:5). He objected to the inhumane traditions of men that turned the Sabbath into a burden, but He upheld the rest, the rejuvenation, the freedom guaranteed by the Fourth Commandment. (See Matthew 5:21-30; Isaiah 42:21; Jeremiah 31:33.)

Even at the end of His Ministry, a few days before He died to pay for the sins of the world, Jesus indicated that the Sabbath command would continue after His death. In prophesying the destruction that was to come on Jerusalem in 70 AD, Jesus told his followers:

Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath (Matt 24:20).

If the Sabbath command was to have been nullified by His death, Jesus' statement makes no sense at all. On the other hand, His statement indicates that the Sabbath was to continue as a holy day for God's people. Hence, an emergency flight, while not strictly prohibited, would not be in keeping with God's purpose for this day of rest.

Throughout His ministry Jesus affirmed the Sabbath. Do those who call Him Savior and Lord need any further reason to keep it?

Reason 4:

Apostles Kept the Sabbath

Following Jesus' death, His most

intimate followers continued to observe the Sabbath. Contrary to popular belief, there is no evidence that they abandoned the seventh day of the week for the first day.

While Jesus lay in the tomb, the women prepared spices for His body. "but they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment" (Luke 23:56). Of course, one could argue that they didn't know yet that the Sabbath was done away; but the interesting point is that Luke, undoubtedly a Gentile writing to a Gentile, wrote this account several decades after the event; yet he in no way qualified the commandment the women obeyed as being "old" or "Jewish" or "done away." It was still, simply, "the commandment."

Paul consistently used the Sabbath for teaching both Jews and Gentiles, "as was his custom" (Acts 17:2; 18:4). In Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas went into the synagogue on the Sabbath where they were asked to speak (Acts 13:14-15). When they had finished, some of the listeners asked them to return the *next Sabbath*, at which time "...almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord" (verses 42-44). Had the Christians been observing Sunday, they could easily have met the next day after their first Sabbath meeting. But people had to go back to work on the first day of the week; apparently both Jews and Gentiles, even "the whole city," were oriented to the seventh-day Sabbath.

Acts 18:4 describes Paul's stay in Corinth, where he worked as a tent-maker during the week. And when did he rest from his physical labor to teach Jews and Greeks? On the Sabbath, not on Sunday.

Most Bible Students and historians agree that the book of James was written about 60 A.D.—about thirty years after the death of our Savior. It is a letter written to brethren scattered in many places (Jas 1:1-2). Were these people meeting in Sunday-keeping "churches"? Chapter 2, verse 2 contains a statement so embarrassing to Sunday-keepers that nearly every major Bible translation deliberately

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News from Local Congregations



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

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

Feast of Tabernacles

Wherever you may be for the Feast of Tabernacles this year, the *Servants' News* staff hopes you will grow in knowledge of His Way and have lots of fine fellowship. Remember to help make this a special Feast for someone else.

This is the last issue to contain Feast information for this year. There have been many "last-minute" changes as congregations largely responsible for certain sites have changed their affiliation during the last few weeks. This has been particularly true in international areas. We have not been informed of all these changes.

If there is some chance that your intended Feast site has been changed or cancelled, we recommend that you check with the convention center or principle hotel. If your organization dropped the site, it is possible that another organization has rebooked the site and if their theology is acceptable to you, you may be able to keep your travel-plans intact!

The festival dates in the list below are October 9-16 unless listed otherwise. (Some organizations calculate the calendar from their own understanding of the Scriptures rather than using the traditional Hebrew calendar which uses a set of rules not derived directly from the Bible.)

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

Feast Sites in Order by State:

- Australia, NSW, Huskisson.** UCG.
- Australia, Qld., Noosa.** UCG.
- Australia, Vic., Lorne.** UCG.
- Australia, Wollongong.** GCG
- Belgium, Hengelhof.** GCG
- Canada, B.C., Whistler** (90 minutes from Vancouver). CGI.
- Canada, B.C., Whistler.** UCG.
- Canada, Ontario, Collingwood.** CGI.
- Canada, Ontario, Niagra Falls.** GCG.
- Canada, Quebec, Hull.** UCG
- Chile, Maitencillo.** UCG
- England, Berwick-on-Tweed.** UCG.
- England, Paignton.** UCG.
- France, Strasborg.** UCG.
- Guatemala, Guatemala.** UCG.
- Guyana, Georgetown.** GCG
- Malaysia.** GCG.
- Peru, Huaráz.** UCG.
- Philippines.** GCG.
- South Africa.** GCG.
- South Africa, Uvongo.** UCG.

- Arizona, Tucson.** UCG.
- Arkansas, Omaha** (North Central AR), Sept 23-30. Ken Tate. 501-426-5261.
- California, Corona** (Southeast of Los Angeles), Oct 8-16. Church of God, in Truth. 909-737-0559.
- California, Del Mar** (San Diego). GCG.
- California, Kings Beach** (near Lake Tahoe). CGI.
- California, Morro Bay.** Talents Ministries. 707-864-2250.
- California, Redding.** UCG.
- Colorado, Colorado Springs.** Oct 11-18. Church-Light Publications, 719-637-1140.
- Colorado, Colorado Springs.** GCG.
- Colorado, Glenwood Springs** (90 miles East of Grand Junction). CBCG.
- Colorado, Keystone.** UCG.

- Florida, Destin** (East of Pensacola). **Computer conference is at this site!** See June issue, page 4. CP.
- Florida, Orlando.** GCG.
- Florida, Orlando.** UCG.
- Florida, Panama City Beach.** CGI.
- Florida, Pensacola.** CBCG
- Florida, St. Petersburg.** Ministries of Yahweh. 705-696-3111.
- Georgia, Jekyll Island.** UCG
- Kentucky, Lexington.** UCG
- Kentucky, Land-Between-the-Lakes.** (near Paducah) CGI.
- Massachusetts, Lowell.** UCG.
- Minnesota, Minneapolis.** UCG.
- Missouri, Lake of the Ozarks.** GCG.
- Missouri, Schell City** (SE of Kansas City) Oct 8-15. Church of Israel, 417-432-3119.
- Oklahoma, Wagoner.** (near Muskogee) CGI.
- South Carolina, Myrtle Beach.** CGSD.
- Texas, Corpus Christi.** UCG.
- Texas, Tyler.** CGI.
- Virginia, Virginia Beach.** GCG.
- Washington, Spokane.** GCG

Places to Fellowship

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

- Christian Biblical Church of God** (CBCG). PO Box 1442, Hollister, CA 95024. 408-637-1875.
- Church of God, 7th Day [Salem WV].** PO Box 328, Salem, WV 26426. 304-782-1411.
- Church of God, International** (CGI).

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P.O. Box 2530, Tyler TX 75710.
903-825-2525

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scotland Anyone?

Anyone interested in a smaller-group Sabbath meeting in Scotland is welcome to contact the Christian Biblical Church of God, PO Box 7357, Kilmarnock, KA3 2LS, Scotland. Visitors are quite welcome, you will not be pressured to join anything.

Flexibility in the Wide Open Spaces

I resigned from the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God in April and my wife and I decided to go to Indianapolis to "test the spirit" and proposals of what came to be formed as the United Church of God. Other members of the WCG in our church areas who left at the same time that I did asked us to attend the conference and bring them news and evaluation of what took place. We and these brethren mutually decided to become part of the United organization.

I am presently serving as the pastor of a United Church of God congregation of about 70 people that come from all over eastern South Dakota and northeastern Iowa. We

meet in two separate locations—Sioux Falls and Watertown twice per month and all together in Brookings once per month. Tapes are played in four locations in member homes once a month to reduce the long distance driving for many at least this once a month. That gives me the opportunity to help with small groups in several other locations to the south of us.

—Herb Teitgen

We appreciate the wisdom of arrangements like these. The Sabbath can quickly become a burden when people have to spend four to eight hours in a vehicle every Sabbath. While the scriptures teach we should make a habit of assembling on the Sabbath, they do not teach that it must be the same place every Sabbath. It is especially difficult to spend hours driving to a location only to hear a tape that could have been copied and shipped to your home for about a dollar.

-N. Edwards

United Church Conference, Growth

As this issue goes to press, a five-day UCG conference is occurring in Denver, Colorado. The purpose of this conference is to continue working on proposals to put before the General Conference of Elders, tentatively scheduled for December 3-5, in Cincinnati, OH. United is currently working under a transitional government plan, governed by a Transitional Board of Directors.

The conference attendees are the Transitional Board, the Regional Pastors and a few members of the Home Office Staff. Topics included Governance and Organization, Local Boards, Strategic Planning, Doctrinal Process, etc. Results of the conference should be available via the Faxback service (317-526-2036) or from your local United representative (call 818-294-0800 if you need assistance).

The United Church of God (UCG) is continuing to grow. Over 15,000 are expected Worldwide for the Feast of Tabernacles this fall. During the last few months, interest in UCG has surged outside of the United States. The following is an excerpt from the August 28th issue of *New Beginnings*, UCG's official

newsletter:

Letters, faxes and phone calls continue to come from around the world requesting information about the United Church of God, and offering help and opportunities for growth.

Last week Steve Andrews was in the United Kingdom, where Low-cost office space (three rooms) has become available in the vicinity of Oxford. We are giving serious consideration to this option, which came through one of our deacons, Paul Anness. Paul, who works for an office-supply company, was able to secure some six-month-old equipment (copier, computers, desks, etc.) at auction prices. Also, last week a second Feast site was secured at Paignton in southwest England.

In Germany the Church has grown to approximately 120 in two weeks. It's possible that biweekly services will be established in German-speaking Switzerland before the Feast. In French-speaking Switzerland registration of the Church is proceeding well.


The news from France is that attendance at the Strasbourg Feast site will likely reach 200. More European brethren are making enquiries all the time.

On another front, Leon Walker was able to visit Colombia last week and spoke to a Church of God congregation in Bogota. As a result, four congregations in Colombia will soon make a decision as to their future with United.

In Canada, Gary Antion held services for the first time in Toronto, Ontario, on August 26. Forty people were present. He went on to Buffalo, New York, where he met with an additional 40 brethren later that day. Gary will probably move to take care of the area after the Feast. Registration of the Church in Canada is complete and a bank account has been opened.

The article goes on to mention Australia, the Philippines, South Africa, and three new USA ministers. See the UCG address at left to get more information.

More Local Congregation Info

More about congregation locations, ministers and events is available from the *In Transition* newspaper (not affiliated with Servants' News.). Send \$10 for 6 issues to *In Transition*, PO Box 450, Monroe, IN 46772. 

Questions and Comments on Church Governance

There remains a dispute, in a part of the Church of God, regarding the proper form of governance in the United Church of God (UCG). The current form of government is temporary and a more permanent form is scheduled to be implemented at the turn of the year.

Hopefully, everyone involved with this organization is trying to find the right balance—enabling local church congregations (LCCs) to do what they can do best and the Home Office to do what it does best. Below are several questions, and some comments, relative to the matter at hand.

1. When the Regional Pastors stood up at the Indianapolis General Conference and stated that they no longer claimed authority over the other ministerial attendees, they were speaking the truth. I, for one, took them at their word. When the same Regional Pastors were in the WCG, they had authority over the field ministers under them, who had authority over the lay members. The Regional Pastors, having authority over the field ministers, obviously had more authority than those under them. Sometimes it helps to state the obvious. So, if the Regional Pastors admit to having no “leftover” authority, this means that those formerly under them (the field ministers and local church elders) also have no such authority. So, by whose authority can a hierarchical system of governance be set up?

It is not right to pretend that the Regional Pastors and field ministers and local elder attendees somehow magically possess the authority to set up a hierarchical structure of government, implement it, and then start giving orders. It begs the central question of, “By whose authority will you set up the hierarchy?” Sorry I have to bring

up this unpleasant difficulty, but it is a fair question that deserves an answer.

It would be convenient for those who seek to establish rulership over God’s people (which should not be read as all ministers) to conveniently overlook the fact that they have no authority to rule—only to serve. Ministers are to be servants. No reasonable lay person would resist someone else who is truly serving them. If they wish to serve the brethren, they do not need our permission. But, if you wish to rule us, the answer should be “no.” We cannot give men the authority to do so and neither has God. This is not a complicated concept. Men were not made to be rulers over other men. It is a form of idolatry. These men seem to have a “power addiction” and need to stop spending their time trying to find ways to establish rulership and start spending time genuinely serving the needs of God’s people.

Not everyone will see it this way. But, this does not change the fact that, in God’s eyes, it is wrong for men to rule over other men. I realize that God has the authority to set up whatever government he chooses. But to whom has He delegated this authority and how do we know? To which man, or group of men has He done so? God’s first choice was that there would be no king, no one to come between himself and the people. Even when he chose Moses, the “hierarchical” structure of government only came into play to mediate a dispute (Deut 18:16). Other than that, people were basically free to live their lives, within t h e

context of his laws.

2. If a hierarchy is what God intends, then should we not come under the Global Church of God’s governance? The senior evangelists are predominantly at Global. Mr. Meredith and Mr. McNair were taught at the feet of Mr. Armstrong. Global is bearing some fruit and doing “The Work.” **How can there possibly be more than one hierarchy, if it is of God?** This is a fair question that deserves an answer. Does God have many hierarchies?

3. If tithes and offerings are to be collected centrally, will the current Home Office executives and employees pledge they will not hire even one additional worker in order to process the tithes and offerings? After all, those who favor a hierarchy often espouse that it is more efficient to do things centrally. Can we presume that collecting the tithes and offerings centrally will not require hiring people (expending God’s tithe money) to pay for work **Continued on next page**

The formation of the UCG was the single largest organizational movement of Sabbath-keepers in our time. It was highlighted by cooperation among a great diversity of people instead of the more common rallying around a central strong human leader. But, many decisions are yet to be made during the UCG’s transitional phase. Are there Bible examples where men needed a leader but the Eternal had not clearly provided one? If you are interested in studying the scriptures relating to government issues, please write for our paper *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans*. It is available free upon request from the address or phone number on the back cover.

that was previously performed with volunteer labor?

4. If ministers are really servants, why are so many lay members afraid they are seeking to reestablish excessive control over our lives? I employ many workers (servants). Never am I afraid one of them will serve me too much, nor am I ever afraid my servants will seek to rule over me. The thought of one of my workers (servants) serving me too much or ruling over me is laughable. Unfortunately, many lay members do fear the ministry ruling over them, which is a sad comment toward too many of the ministers.

If the ministry and the Home Office employees will seek to spend their time and energy genuinely serving us we will respond and rally around you. Preach the truth with boldness, without hesitation. Encourage us!. Help us and we will follow your spiritual leadership. We will even be very happy to pay you more than you have been paid in the past. But, seek to rule over us and this branch of the Church of God is doomed. Contrary to what the hierarchicalists believe, **it is unlikely that a large work will be done.**

5. Speaking of "The Work," just what is it? Is it not many things? Why is it that feeding the flock and nurturing the sheep is relegated to barely receiving honorable mention. Many seem to believe that we must preach the gospel of the Kingdom as a witness to all nations. They believe we must sound out the Ezekiel warning message, we must have a YOU and a YES, we must have a college, we must whatever. The people in this branch of God's church are wounded and need some time to heal before we embark on some major undertaking. We are fortunate that God has seen fit to provide us with enough money to pay ministers. To the extent there isn't a lot of money to do much else does not mean that UCG is not doing a work. I personally would not want to be part of a church that did not understand and practice this. There must be room for warmth and nurturing in God's church.

After all, God is love. God says in Romans 1 that his entire creation is a witness. When you compare the entire

creation witnessing for God, 24 hours a day, every day, it kind of pales a TV program that, at best, had an audience share of about 1 percent of the U.S. While I am all for helping perform many aspects of God's work, we should not underestimate God. The gospel was preached "everywhere" in the first century (Mark 16:20) without technology or a big budget. He does not need us. We need him.

6. If doing a work in the traditional (WCG) sense of the word is so important to God, then why didn't he have someone else appointed Pastor General of the WCG? The entire infrastructure was already in place to do as big or even a bigger work than God used Mr. HWA and us to do. The fact of the matter is that even if all of the tithes and offerings are collected centrally (which they won't be because I am not going to send my tithe there) with only about 13,000 members in the USA, there will only be a gross income of about \$15 million per year. Once you subtract out about 120 salaries (about \$6 million per year, including payroll taxes, health insurance, etc., I estimate), hall rentals, office expenses, travel expenses, second and third tithe assistance, even very basic literature, and other necessary expenses, UCG will only have about \$3 million dollars left over. If some of this is left at the local church congregation level, then maybe \$2 million or less will be left for Home Office "disposable income".

That is only enough income to do a small "work" in the traditional sense. God will either have to provide a dramatic increase in membership or do his work in a more spiritual way, perhaps with miracles. Who knows? All I know is that there is not enough money to do a traditionally defined "work." Switching over to a largely unpaid ministry would also work, but that is not likely to be a popular option. And there is even a bigger problem for centralists to consider.

7. While perhaps a majority of the field ministers may be more comfortable with a hierarchy, a substantial percentage of the lay members (though perhaps not a majority) are not comfortable with a hierarchy. And many of those who are not comfortable with a

hierarchy are NOT going to send their tithes and offerings to Arcadia. As previously stated, I have no intention of doing so and I personally know many others who feel the same way.

It seems to us that a number of the people in the Home Office have spent most of their time trying to influence the governance of the UCG to be hierarchical. They should have been spending their time serving the needs of the lay members and field ministers, instead of trying to find a way to rule over us. As previously stated, you can have our permission to serve us, but not to rule over us. (This is not meant to be taken that if a troublesome unrepentant member or minister is not acting as a Christian that the ministry would not have the authority to put them out of this branch of the Church of God. Nor is it meant to be taken that the ministry would not guide the Church of God spiritually. Of course they should.) I mean to say the kind of authority that is Satanic, that seeks to rule that which it has no business seeking to rule, i.e. men trying to be God, or men playing church instead of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

As previously mentioned, UCG's collective net disposable income is not likely to be more than \$3 million or so per year **if** everyone continues sending in their current level of contributions. What will happen to the hierarchicalist's goal of doing a "Work" when many lay members refuse to tithe to Arcadia? The \$3 million, or whatever the amount of the disposable income is, will not exist. The Home Office might not even receive enough funds to pay all of the salaries and bills. It is something for them to think hard about, because what I just said is very real.

Are those that will not tithe centrally "little children who are threatening to take their ball and go home?" Actually, hopefully, we are mature Christians who are going to seek out and support those who are genuinely interested in serving, in stark contrast to those who simply seek to rule over us, or to use us to do their projects.

8. Some people in UCG will not be happy unless there is a centralized system of governance and some will

not be happy unless there is not. Why not, instead of just proposing one system of governance, make allowance for differences in administrations, as long as there are not differences in core doctrines? Why not allow LCCs to affiliate with the UCG Home Office even though they wish to locally administrate but also be a part of something bigger? In other words, if a group of Christians seek to peacefully associate and cooperate with the Home Office, while sending in whatever amount of contributions they wish to send in, why not let them? Actually, it would be a violation of the UCG code of ethics to not allow their fellowship. Why not fashion a compromise where those who wish to come fully under the Home Office's umbrella may do so and those who wish not to, but who wish to cooperate peacefully can do so?

The mistake that those who wish a hierarchical structure of governance are making is they believe that if they put forth just one possible structure of governance, to the General Conference, that it will be approved. That much is probably true. However, it is going to divide the UCG and leave little money to do a "work."

The Board of the Home Office ought to put forth three possible proposals and let them be discussed:

#1) Locally administered churches tied together (physically speaking) by a central association service provider.

#2) A hierarchical structure of governance where most things are administrated centrally.

#3) A central government with an option for those who wish local administration but who would send some contributions to the Home Office and peacefully affiliate.

The third option is a peaceful compromise. It should definitely be offered as an option for those who would like to be part of something bigger, but who do not wish to have the Home Office

control everything.

9. If a hierarchical structure of government is so important to God, and to the preservation and well being of His church, who were the hierarchical leaders for the past 2,000 years? What are there names? I would dearly love to learn the identity of these great leaders of the past and to learn of the work that they did.

10. If a local Board of Directors is a check and balance for the local congregation, why do some at the Home Office want to eliminate these boards?

11. If there is safety in a multitude of counselors, why didn't the Home Office Board of Directors approve the

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You may read this article and say: "We never had to think about all these details before—should not the man in charge simply appoint someone to handle them?" Maybe so, but who is in charge? Why? Who should handle the details? How?

The need for cooperation and living justly according to the law is clear. What does our Father expect of us? Are we supposed to find a leader who is apparently being used by God and then simply do whatever he says? Has that worked very well during the past few years?

If we are in training to become kings and priests, should not we be learning to use our Bibles to help us make decisions in matters of government, human relations, finances, and service in our congregations? How were these matters handled in the New Testament? The Old? All of us probably need to study these things a lot more than we do!

hiring of over 100 field ministers? It was simply done at the management level.

12. If following the established government is so important why has one of the home office board members not set up a local church board and not allowed the brethren in his area to tithe locally? Why has not the Home Office Board formally reprimanded him for not doing what was approved at Indianapolis? In other words, one Board member has not implemented the transition plan in his own church area and yet that same Board member will probably expect everyone else to fall into line behind a

hierarchical system of government if that is what is approved at the next General Conference.

13. Many church members, almost all in the several areas I have knowledge of, have stopped paying 3T. They have also stopped paying tithe of the tithe, since we have learned that the true cost to pay for the FOT is about \$8 to \$10 per person. Since the income from these two areas is down dramatically, but the requests for assistance continue, will first tithe be used to pay for these needs? I believe that some LCCs will decide to do so. This coupled with many members now tithing on net income is going to further impact the collective income of UCG.

If tithes and offerings are collected centrally, how will the local requests for assistance be met? The very nature of these requests make them unpredictable, and hence difficult to budget for. Will the Home Office cut the modest TV budget in order to pay out unbudgeted requests for charitable assistance from local church congregations? I won't pretend to know the answer, but I do know it is a big issue that is not going to go away. It will have to be addressed. To the extent that a LCC wishes to use some of the first tithe money to meet these local charitable needs, it would be better off to collect contributions locally and to send what is left to the Home Office, after paying local expenses. Again, this is a tough problem that I don't have the answer to. I just know it is a real problem.

I would sincerely appreciate receiving back answers and replies to the above questions and comments. Hopefully, we can find a way to come to an agreement so that the correct balance can be found and God's people and the people of this world can be served as best as we can do the job with the resources available. Thank you.

—Dale Stogner, Garden Grove, CA
eMail:75361.2454@compuserve.com

"Sabbath", continued from page 4
mis-translates it.

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly [synagogue] a man with gold rings... (Jas 2:1-2)

The Greek word translated "assembly" is *sunagoge* (συναγωγή). It is translated "**synagogue**" **every other place** in the New Testament. Some of these people may have still been meeting in synagogues with unbelieving Jews while others attended synagogues consisting entirely of believers. Is there any evidence of Sunday-keeping synagogues? Of course not! While James places great emphasis on "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ," he shows that the many groups of believers to which he was writing worshiped in Sabbath-keeping synagogues.

There is just no evidence the early church began worshipping on Sunday; in fact, the phrase "first day of the week" is used only eight times in the entire New Testament, and none of these mentions anything about Sunday being a special day in any respect. One, 1 Corinthians 16:2, even suggests that the day was to be used for work, for taking an inventory and laying aside an offering at home!

Reason 5: Sunday Adopted for Political Reasons

History reveals that it was because of political and social pressures that Christians gradually abandoned the Sabbath—long after the time of the Apostles. Severe anti-Jewish attitudes developed in the Roman world during the first and second centuries. As acts of repression, the Romans outlawed circumcision, sacrificing, Sabbath-keeping and other Jewish practices. Consequently, Christians, particularly at Rome, found it expedient to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the Jews, to demonstrate that they were not Jewish. One way they did this was to work on the Sabbath. Sunday, which was already a holiday for many Romans, was a convenient substitute.

When Constantine officially recognized Christianity in the fourth century, he put the power of the empire behind Sunday observance. In the centuries that followed, the first day of the week became so firmly entrenched as the "Christian Sabbath" that even Protestant reformers could not dislodge it, though they claimed their authority from the Bible and the Bible only.

Reason 6: The Sabbath is a Sign of God's People

Near the end of God's teaching to Moses on Mount Sinai He said:

Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.... Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a **perpetual covenant**. (Ex 31:13,16).

This covenant appears to be separate from other covenants. People that kept the Sabbath would be recognized as His people. If other laws were broken, God might send punishments such as famine, disease and captivity. But as long as they continued to keep the Sabbath, they would still be recognized as the Eternal's people.

In John 13:35 we find: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Does this instruction replace the Sabbath covenant? No it is in addition to it! There are many Christians who profess love for one another (and some really do it), but do not keep the Sabbath. There are many Jews that claim to keep the Sabbath (and some really do it) but do not believe in the love spoken of by our Savior.

Previous points of this article show that the early believers kept the Sabbath as well as demonstrated the love placed in their hearts by the holy spirit (Rom 5:5). We should do the same.

Reason 7: Man Needs Rest

Modern science is learning more

and more about the effects of stress on human beings. We do need time to recuperate from the physical, mental, and emotional pressures of life. Each night we need sleep; and each week we need a day to cease from our daily labors, a day to relax, to rest, to reflect on who we are and where we're going. We need time to contemplate God's creation, His love, and our need for His redemptive powers.

God, in His consummate wisdom, set aside at Creation, a day just for those purposes.

Surely we can kid ourselves that we have to work seven days to "get everything done." Wise men have come to see that they get more done in six days if they rest on the seventh, that they enjoy working days more if they observe a day of ceasing. Of course, it's not easy to get off the treadmill of life's everyday pressures. It takes faith, wisdom, and courage to quit the "rat race," to climb into a time capsule of refreshment, the seventh-day Sabbath commanded by God.

Properly understood, the Sabbath is not merely an Old Covenant legal requirement; rather it is a day of liberty from stress and toil, it is a day when Christians are free to rest, free to do good, free to be rejuvenated, free to worship and fellowship with others. As Jesus Christ offers rest for the spirit through the forgiveness of sins, so His Sabbath offers rest for the body and the mind; it offers 24 hours of a different kind of time: special time, sacred time, time that has been waiting at the end of every week since Creation.

There have always been Christians who rejected the traditions of men and were faithful to the Fourth Commandment. There are now more than five million people around the world, Christians of many different persuasions, who rest from their work on the Sabbath according to the will of God. These are Christians who enjoy the freedom and blessings of celebrating God's creation, His rest, and His redemption by resting on the day He set aside. You, too, can experience this freedom and these blessings, by observing the Sabbath!

—Richard A. Wiedenheft

The New Circumcision

The “Old Testament” records an agreement between God and Abraham. The seal or outward sign of this covenant was circumcision:

He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any stranger who is not your descendant.

He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

And the uncircumcised male, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant. (Gen 17:12-14 New King James Version throughout.)

As strong as these statements are, Paul seemingly stands in opposition to this seal of the covenant. “Indeed I, Paul, said to you that if you become circumcised Christ will profit you nothing” (Gal 5:2).

There certainly appears to be a contradiction in the scripture. Even to the most fervent believer, scriptures such as these pose a problem.

Traditional Christianity has a pattern for dealing with such problems. It consists of two steps. First, the Bible is cleaved in two parts commonly called the Old and New Testaments. Secondly, the Old Testament is dealt with in a manner that makes it appear inferior to the New Testament. The New Testament is sometimes portrayed as a correction on the Old Testament. This is the quick and easy way to deal with problems such as these. It doesn't require much thought or effort, and “who wants to be bothered with the Old Testament anyway?”

Some statements indicative of this type of reasoning are “that was the old covenant, this is the new covenant,” “the Mosaic law was nailed to the cross,” “you can't Judaize Christianity” or “it is Christ or circumcision.”

There is a dangerous problem with this way of thinking. It is the same problem brought to the fore by the parable of the talents. “Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed,” came the answer of the man who hid the talent (Matt 25:24). The

problem of this servant is generally diagnosed as sloth. But the hiding of the talent was an act of contempt toward the master. The servant's statement reveals an attitude of total contempt for the master.

Attempts to make the Old Testament appear flawed or out of date are, at their core, acts of contempt—essentially saying God was unfair to millions of people for many generations (2Tim 3:16). These efforts will always leave one devoid of understanding (Matt 25:29-30).

Then why is it, do you suppose, that God allowed apparent contradictions in the Bible? For skeptics they seem to be a weakness. For the believer these contradictions can be a fearful thing. I must admit they used to scare me to death. I wanted so badly to believe but then I'd see what appeared to be a contradiction in the Bible and faith would fly out the window.

I hope after you read this article you will never view contradiction in the Bible the same way. God did not just allow apparent contradictions in the Bible. God actively caused those apparent contradictions to appear in the scriptures. First off, they are attention getters. Secondly, it is natural for the mind of man to see these seeming inconsistencies as a challenge, almost like a riddle or puzzle, if you will. These apparent contradictions are God's way of throwing up a red flag, “great study, thought, and My understanding required here.”

Understanding will come through time, efforts, and prayerful study. However, using the New Testament as a stick with which to beat the Old Testament will leave one knowing less than the individual did before he or she started.

So let us delve into scripture and see if we can't resolve this circumcision issue that raged red hot nearly two thousand years ago.

It would be nice to know in detail exactly why God falls so deeply in love with certain individuals. Abraham was a man whom God loved (Isa 41:8).

God chose Abraham to father a great nation (Gen 12:2). This physical nation was to come from the loins of Abraham. The seal of this covenant was placed on the generative organ, the organ from which this nation was to be born. The mark was placed on Abraham and on every male child born as his descendant.

The point from which this nation

grew was given a mark. It was a mark that was to be shared by the entire nation. Understanding this is key to knowing what God required of the New Testament Church regarding circumcision. It will be shown that it is the job of the church to perpetuate circumcision!

Thousands of years after Abraham in the times of Jesus, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, religious disease pervaded the land. It was not a problem with the Old Testament—the only scriptures of the day—but the manner in which people related to the Scriptures. The condition was prophesied long ago:

Inasmuch as these people draw near to Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden (Is 29:13-14).

This is not an indictment against the Old Testament but against the leadership and the people of that time. The latter half of Luke chapter 11 explains the problems in detail. Notice this portion:

And He said, “Woe to you also, *you* lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.... that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of **this generation** (Luke 11:46-47,50).

The obsession with rules and lack of love for neighbor had reached its peak during the generation in which Christ lived. Their reasoning was often like this: “God loves me when....” or “God loves me because....” or “if I do this perfectly I will have God's favor.” This is conditional love. It is truly an unhealthy view of love. Here we have a stepping stone of a problem in which human worth is gauged by rituals and routines.

Had the term existed in their day, I wonder how many times we might have read about Jesus, Paul or Peter addressing the issue of “perfectionism.”

The perfectionist uses the menial doing of things as a means of self-justi-

fication. The religious leaders of this day added thousands of additional items of "tradition" to further their goal of mechanical "perfection."

And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you (Luke 11:38-41).

The teaching here was to **do good**, not to perform needless rituals. Other scriptures show how this ritualism was directly in conflict with scripture:

And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do (Mark 7:7-8).

But even if he disregarded the traditions of men, the Jew in the time of Christ had so many Scriptural vehicles through which perfectionism could be expressed: the Sabbath, Holy Days, clean and unclean meats, and circumcision, to name a few. So, are all these practices vile? Absolutely not. Christ showed how it was good to follow the minor points of the law, but it was not to obscure the most important parts:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone (Matt 23:23).

But for the perfectionist the mechanical observances can become a convenient cloak for the sinful nature of man. To such a mind it would be very comfortable to make a cut in the flesh as an outward sign of righteousness. The same mind would burn upon hearing about the need for grace and forgiveness of sins. "These concepts, after all, are only needed for sinners—people that do not do things perfectly like I do" they reason

Unfortunately, the work of Christ has led some men to embrace lawlessness, as if Christ came to attack the law. Christ will come, in part, as a correction to this problem. **The Old Testament was never attacked, but the way some men relat-**

ed to it was. Paul did not do away with circumcision but called for it to continue in a fantastic way:

But he is a Jew who *is one* inwardly, and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God (Rom 2:29).

We do receive love from God independent of our actions. The ultimate expression of this love was the crucifixion with Christ saying let my death save the lives of those who kill me. What a gift to a nation so plagued with physical perfectionism.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Rom 5:8-10).

Christ, like Abraham, was to give birth to a new and wonderful group of people. For Abraham it started with the act of copulation. For Christ it started with crucifixion, the supreme act of love. For Abraham the mark was in the generative organ. For Christ and the Christian the mark also lies in the generative organ, the heart! That mark was in the heart of Christ and it should rest in the heart of every spiritual descendant of Christ, for the heart is the generative organ of every Christian. There is no badge or outward sign of righteousness, but it is circumcision just the same. It is the new circumcision.

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever (1Pet 1:22-23).

The old and the new circumcision can be compared to a daughter who has never seen her father. He has been imprisoned in a foreign country from her birth. When the girl is five years of age, her mother hands the girl a picture saying, "This is your father." Actually, it is a small representation of her father on a piece of paper. All the same, not a day goes by that the girl does not hold the picture and gaze at it longingly. Seven years pass and her

father is released from prison. The girl with her mother go to the airport to meet her father. The girl, having never seen her father, walks right up to him as he stands in a crowd and embraces him. Instantly, she recognized her father because of the picture she held for seven years. As you might suppose, the picture can never have the importance in the fathers' presence that it did in his absence. That is not to say that the picture of the girl's father was "done away." The picture was the vehicle through which, in a small way, the girl was able to know her father.

No longer does she hold the picture daily—though she keeps it in a treasured place. Now she holds her father daily, the great fulfillment of the smaller picture.

So it is with circumcision. It's not that the concept was done away with, it is simply that the fulfillment is much greater than the small picture. Paul perpetuated the practice knowing that true circumcision is a mark in the heart that identifies us as a spiritual descendant of our savior, Jesus Christ.

There is much more the Scriptures tell us about circumcision of the flesh and how it is to be practiced today. But we must recognize that all such discussions are of lesser importance than our vital need to be circumcised of heart.

No need to knock the Old Testament. Paul spoke, not in the machination of his own mind, but stood firmly on the scriptures:

The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as *it is* this day. Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer (Deut 10:15-16).

And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live (Deut 30:6).

Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, and burn so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your doings (Jer 4:4).

As circumcision of the foreskin was utterly essential to be a member of the nation of Israel, so is circumcision of heart utterly essential to be one of His saints today. Do we have it?

—Kyle Williams

were killed and was allowed to quote only ten scriptures from the translation of my choice, I think I could make two very convincing papers, one showing that the lambs were killed near the beginning of the 14th, and the other showing they were killed near the end of the 14th. Obviously, both answers are not correct. When we try to let the Bible interpret the Bible, consider all of the possible translations and get all of the related scriptures, we end up with hundreds of pages to consider—something I have not finished doing on this subject.

What do I mean by using the Bible wrongly? Some of the authors of papers **simply ignored scriptures that disagreed with their point of view.** Others would start a point with a vague scripture, heavily emphasize it, then state that other clear scriptures could not possibly be in conflict with this point, and offer outlandish explanations of what these other scriptures must mean. Other times, writers would say "the Bible never says this," when indeed there was a scripture that said exactly that. I am not certain any of the authors were trying to deceive people; I think they were just doing their best to explain a complex situation. By openly exchanging papers and information, we can learn from each other, while praying for His spirit to guide us into all truth.

—Norman S. Edwards

Personal Letter on Healing, Computer Publishing, the Edwards Family and the Feast

LETTER: August 8, 1995

Dear Norman,

I'm forwarding this [electronic mail] message that Wilf [a man that contributes many well-documented, thought-provoking messages to the Compuserve Religion Forum] frequently sent out to some of the brethren last week which I thought you might be interested in reading. You can see that he's still not out of the woods yet. In an E-mail he sent me recently, Wilf wrote me that he has to enlarge the print on his computer screen in order to see it well enough.

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for the message about Wilf. I have prayed for him in this difficult matter.

LETTER: Do you know of anyone who truly has the gift of healing? Wasn't Dick Armstrong gifted in that regard? I wonder if there's anyone else around who has that gift. Don't you think it was a cop-out

for WCG to say that if a whole lot of healings took place that would bring persecution on the church? It seems as if there is a lack of faith because when you read Luke 18:8 it says when Christ returns will He find faith on the earth. What do you think, Norman?

RESPONSE: I know of a couple people that might have the gift of healing, but I would like to know a little more about them before I recommend them to anyone. Some of them have an understanding of the Bible that is rather different than ours. We have to be a little careful—I have seen TV faith-healers that I am utterly convinced are demon-possessed, but they do appear to get good results. The persecution line is a cop-out. Herbert Armstrong had many quiet healings in his early years and that did not bring persecution—it was his message that brought persecution. I feel that we do not have a lot of healings now as we have so much more we need to learn. Groups with great healings would have a tendency to boast about how God is working with them and they would see much less of a need to continually study and grow. I agree with you on the faith aspect also, I feel that it is certainly lacking in most groups I am aware of. I know I usually do not have the kind of faith that I really need. But on the bright side, I see more people growing in faith than I have ever seen before.

LETTER: Today I just finished reading the article you had published in Churchlight on judging [*Servants' News* encourages other publications to use its articles.] Had you ever thought of putting it in the C/S WCG Forum Library? I thought it was very well done. It would be great if the churches would put that into practice, but the way prophecy reads in Daniel 12:7, it is predicted that the power of the holy people will be scattered. I think a big part of the end time preaching will be done by the two witnesses.

RESPONSE: I have a project to put many articles into Forum libraries, but I would like to finish my project to retain the bold/italic/underline emphasis. I do not like to simply "save in ASCII" because I often use italic and bold to delineate certain words in scripture quotations or other places. What does a statement like "note the bold words above" mean when the formatting has been removed and the reader can't tell which words were bold? Also, some program's "ASCII save" features do not do a good job of saving type-setter's quotes, long dashes, etc. I am planning to develop some Word macros that will change *bold* *text* *to* *look* *like*

this, /italic/ /text/ /to/ /look/ /like/ /this/, and underscored_text_to_look_like_this. That will at least allow most emphasis to be understood in ASCII. Enough technical talk!

It says the power will be scattered, but it does not say it will become powerless. Matthew 10:23 indicates that if we are persecuted in one city, we should flee to another. This sounds like a decentralized work being done. When the WCG was persecuted by the state of California in 1979, the financial operation fled to Arizona. Had this been a Federal Government persecution, the WCG may well have ceased to function. However, it would be very difficult to stop the preaching of the Gospel if it were being done by many different people scattered throughout the world each with signs and wonders from the Eternal. (The preaching of the early apostles was done this way.)

LETTER: How long have you been in the church? My husband was baptized in 1970 in Boston and I was baptized in 1971 in Pittsburgh and we were married in 1973. We also attended congregations in Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, Pasadena, Reseda, Phoenix, San Francisco, Oakland, Santa Rosa, and Fairfield, CA. What about you and your wife? Did you & your wife graduate from Ambassador and, if so, when? John & I never attended. Where are you and your wife originally from and which congregations have you attended during the past years? And in what capacity were you employed by WCG in Pasadena?

RESPONSE: I heard the World Tomorrow broadcast as a teenager with my family in the late 60's. I attended WCG services in 1973 and went to AC, Big Sandy in 1974. AC Big Sandy closed in the spring of 1977 so I finished my senior year in Pasadena. I had a variety systems analysis, project management, and computer programming positions from 1975 as a student to 1992 when I resigned. Marleen and I went to college the same four years but never dated until almost four years after graduation. We were married in 1983. We lived in and around Pasadena all those years, with a two-year assignment in Big Sandy in 1988-1990. We usually attended the Auditorium PM congregation.

We started with Global from the first service in late 1992. I set up their computer systems, edited their first few publications, served on their doctrinal committee and was secretary of the Board of Directors. We moved to San Diego when their headquarters moved in 1994 and

then moved again to Arkansas in December of that year.

LETTER: Does publishing "Servants' News" keep you extremely busy? You must get calls from all around the world.

RESPONSE: It takes up about 60 hours per week and I have about a 2-month backlog on complex letters that need to be answered.

LETTER: Do you ever wonder where all of the brethren, who have left over all these many years, have gone? I wonder how many brethren that would total by now. I know a few people who left years ago and they don't want to be bothered with any kind of church and I know others who kept the faith once delivered and are holding fast even though they're not with any big group per se. Since John & I were disfellowshipped back in 1986 we've had the opportunity to visit different 7th day, holy day observing groups, though very small they may be, and some of them not having even ever been connected with WCG. Have you ever come across any others besides the ones Alan Ruth has tracked down?

RESPONSE: Even during the last few years, I believe it has been accurately estimated that 20,000 to 30,000 people have left the WCG and not gone to any major group. The Bible Sabbath Association publishes a Directory of Sabbath Keeping Groups that lists many that Alan does not have. I have run into a number that are not on either list. I would like to put together my own list someday, but I am getting further away from that day, rather than closer.

LETTER: By the way, you asked what our sons names are and they are Jim, 21 and Joseph, 11. Jim was home schooled all the way through high school and now we're doing the same with Joseph. How old are your boys?

RESPONSE: Joel is 10, Joshua is 8, Jesse will be 5 in a month, and James will be 2 this month.

LETTER: Are you more or less independent? By that I mean you're not affiliated with any one group. I know you used to be with Global or are you still with Global or am I mistaken about your having separated from that group?

RESPONSE: I have attended with Global nearly every week until the last month or so. I also attend with United and some other smaller groups. I think Paul warned against aligning ourselves with a specific teacher in 1 Cor 3. I am interested in helping and learning from the Eternal's people wherever they may be. When I attend a local congregation, I do

not encourage people to leave it—I do not even mention Servant's News or my other writings unless someone asks or is specifically seeking that kind of information. Many of the people in the congregations I attend do not know anything about Friends of the Brethren. If, at some point, some group decides to "ban me from attending their services," they will be the ones causing division.

LETTER: I wonder if Hurricane Ewin affected the meeting hall in Pensacola. John's Mom, who lives in Palm Beach County on the east coast of Florida, had to evacuate her home but her community didn't suffer anywhere near as bad as Pensacola. Will you be attending with Jim Rector or Fred Coulter or who? I forgot what you had told me. It's just a little more than two months till the Feast. Time flies. It will be here before we know it!!!

—J.L., New Mexico

RESPONSE: I will be attending with Jim Rector in Destin FL. I think the Hurricane missed that sight. I might stop in to see Mr. Coulter, too.

—Norman S. Edwards

With CGI and Giving & Sharing

LETTER: July 9, 1995

Please put me on the mailing list for your newspaper. Also, enclose a little information about yourselves if available. We are fellowshipping with the Church of God Intl. I have been a member of WCG 1971-1979 and have been somewhat affiliated with Giving & Sharing, Neck City, Mo.

S. J. K., Fort Dodge, IA.

RESPONSE: You are on the mailing list, please see the response to the previous letter in this section for some information about us.

—Norman S. Edwards

Keeping the Sabbath at Home

LETTER: August 3, 1995

Dear Mr. Edwards,

I have read your article on *How the Eternal Governs through Humans*, June 1995, which was given to me by someone else. All I can say is thank you for putting all that together. It shows that you have walked that long road with the rest of us.

The way you put it all together was a work of art. Even though we have experienced and have understood nearly all of what you wrote, it is really good to have it all documented the way you did it.

I have enclosed a small donation to help you in your efforts to inform the

brethren.

I would like very much to be put on your mailing list. Articles such as this have a healing effect on brethren who are disappointed, hurt, or confused.

I was finally "forced" to break off fellowship with Global in March, this year. When the video on "church unity" came out I realized we were going down that wrong road again and no one at the top was going to listen to reason.

We have a small domestic Bible Study in our home each Sabbath with a few friends. We are receiving tapes, etc. from Fred Coulter. We are planning on attending the Feast at Pensacola with him this year.

I was thinking just this week about how merciful and loving God is by providing a tape ministry to the scattered brethren so we are not without a minister to call for counsel or encouragement when the need arises. Now you are providing a ministry of articles which can do the same thing.

It is indeed refreshing to see someone wanting to teach the truth without a personal agenda. Not wanting to establish a large cumbersome organization but just be a vehicle for that "still small voice" as God comes to and teaches His scattered flock.

I would like to hear from you and get a little better acquainted with you.

My wife Catherine has been a member of God's church 31 years and I have been for 27 years.

]When we broke with WCG I went on to Global but she stayed home and began studying here with a couple other ladies, and now our group ranges from 6 to 12 attending on the Sabbath.

Please send me a list of articles you have available at this time and add me to your regular mailing list.

Thank you, and may our God bless you in your efforts to serve Him and the brethren.

D. A., Kennesaw, GA.

RESPONSE: Thank you for your encouragement. Please see the letter beginning on page 14 of this issue for more information about myself. I will be at the *Cornerstone Publications* Feast site this year, not far from where you are attending the Feast. You can reach me there at 904-837-7093.

There certainly are scriptural examples of assembling at homes on the Sabbath. We are sending you our article *Assembling on the Sabbath* which may help you. The Eternal certainly requires every branch to

Continued on next page

“bear fruit” (John 15:1-8) Larger organizations usually bear most of their fruit from their headquarters and rely on their membership primarily for money. A small branch can bear its share of fruit if it is firmly anchored to the Vine (our Saviour). The members must realize that they are responsible—that it is no longer a headquarters they are relying on. They must pray for the spiritual gifts, and use them with zeal and not give up. There are many different ways a group can serve. But if a 10-person group only teaches the truth to one new person each year, they are bearing more fruit (per person) than the average church organization.

—Norman S. Edwards

Confidential from Big Sandy

LETTER:

August 14, 1995

Dear Norm,

Greetings! I have recently been introduced to some of your literature. I would like to regularly receive your *Friends of the Brethren* newsletter. Please also send the *Assembling on the Sabbath* article to me. For obvious reasons, I request that you not now use my name in any publication.

Please accept this donation to help in your work.

—[name withheld], Big Sandy, TX

RESPONSE: Thank you for your support. We realize that each individual should have the time to think out what they want to do about their own beliefs. We were in a situation once where we wanted to communicate with other brethren, but knew we could instantly lose our job and our friends if our thinking became known to the leaders of our congregation. We appreciated those who kept it confidential until we had time to thoroughly study the Bible and think out our next step.

The Eternal has promised us a way of escape from all of our temptations (1Cor 10:13), but even a casual reading of the Bible shows that He used a great variety of methods and often made allowance for the preferences of the individuals involved (2Kings 20, Acts 21:10-14, etc.).

I have prayed that the Eternal will grant you wisdom and blessings in dealing with your situation.

—Norman S. Edwards

Avoiding Competition

LETTER:

August 9, 1995

Dear Norman Edwards,

Thank you for your continued efforts to distribute truthful and balanced information.

We are all excited, filled with zeal,

ready to put the past behind and go forward as Christ leads us.

For several weeks I have had an uneasy feeling that God's people could be very vulnerable in one area Satan excels—competition. The letters in the July issue—just received—only increase my apprehension.

Mr. Armstrong tried to protect us as he would his children. We must now have “The whole armor of God” and stand strong against our real enemy as mature members.

Perhaps you would like to write an article on the subject of competition and its ugly effects in a future issue of the *Servant's News*.

May God bless you !!!!!!!

Please send: *Just What Does the New Covenant Do?* by Joseph Chunko.

C.R., El Paso, TX

RESPONSE: Thank you for your suggestion. We have made a note to produce an article on competition for sometime in the future. We agree that all of the various “church” groups should not fight with each other or threaten their members for attending other groups. Paul covered this issue in 1 Corinthians 3.

I have seen many articles on competition vs cooperation in the past and some of them failed to account for that vast difference in productivity between a competitive society such as the USA and a planned, enforced, cooperative society like the former USSR. Why was the apparently competitive USA so much more efficient?

Without writing the whole article here, the answer is that the Bible supports private ownership of property and right of an individual to reap the benefits of his own superior performance. The founders of the USA realized these principles and made them a part of its law which largely contributed to its success. These factors were lacking in the communist systems and were a major contributor to the demise of these countries.

There is nothing wrong with someone attempting to build a “better mousetrap” (better than what is currently available). What is wrong is **negative competition:** the maker of the old mousetrap trying to stop the “better mousetrap” from being sold. While the USA has many laws designed to prevent companies and individuals from unfairly competing with each other, it still happens. In this age of generally declining morals, it seems that the marketing plans of many corporations are designed more to convince customers that their product is good and the others are bad, not to actually make their product bet-

ter. In today's system of expensive lawyers, corrupt courts, and bureaucracy, a “little guy” with a good idea has little chance against the big guys. If they stand to lose millions of dollars because of some upstart's idea, they do not mind spending a few hundred thousand for bribes or whatever is needed to make sure that the “little guy” goes out of business. It is this **negative competition that is evil.**

On the other hand, some think that in the millennium someone will be appointed as “God's designer of mousetraps” and he will design “God's mousetrap” and everyone must use that design or they sell mousetrap. Of course that eliminates all competition, but it also eliminates creativity and original thought. We could miss out on original approaches such as mouse-catching puppies, mouse-repelling herbs, trained anti-mice, etc.

But someone might ask, if one of these new ideas is successful, won't the people making the old mouse traps go out of business and possibly become poor? In the millennium they will have their own place to live and their own “vine and fig tree” to eat from. They will not starve and are free to enter a new business. Why should society continue onward with an inferior mouse-trap?

The Eternal certainly wants us to use the creative powers He has given us. The Millennial government will provide just judgments so that people cannot take unfair advantage of each other. It will make sure that manufacturers of unsafe or fraudulent products compensate their customers for the trouble they cause.

Today, each person and congregation needs to use their gifts to do the work the Eternal has given them to do. There should be no competition for “members.” If you convince one person to join your group against their own understanding or against the Eternal's will, you have not made your group better, you have probably sinned. If another person is teaching a doctrine incorrectly, don't attack them, but teach the doctrine correctly. Is someone attacking you? Don't stop to fight them, keep on working and let the Eternal take care of them.

—Norman S. Edwards

Preach the Gospel—Not Judge

LETTER:

July 10, 1995

Friends of the Brethren,

In answer to a letter from a member of the Global Church of God, (“Global or United?” June 95 issue, p 15) I see all is not well with the Global Church of God.

"Different Drummer", cont' from page 1
songs and faces. Obviously, it's going to be a lovely sunset party at the edge of the cliff, as the day draws to an end.

You arrive at the edge. They tell you to jump. And you do! The leaders of the parade are assuring everyone, as they go over the edge, that Jesus Christ will protect them. He will keep all from dashing their foot against a stone. Legions of angels will be at everyone's disposal as they fall. The leaders tell everyone not to worry, Christ is in charge. They say: "In the name of the Lord. The Lord protects our group from trials and danger, no matter what road we walk."

You think on the leader's promises as you tumble toward the rocks below. The violent crashing waves become closer, and louder. You begin to see that the rocks are sharp and jagged. You hope the Lord will soon correct what you now think has been a gross error: the turn down the side road and subsequent jump from the cliff. You pray: Lord save me and the others from the rocks. You think: The Lord is in charge. Won't he make corrections? Isn't all this the Lord's doing?

"Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter my flock," says the Lord (Jer 23:1). "For both the prophet and priest are profane, yea, in My house have I found their wickedness!" says the Lord. Hearken not unto the words of these wicked prophets that lead you. They have built you up, made you to think you are something special. You have become vain. They speak a vision of their own heart. This vision is **not** out of the mouth of the Lord" (verses 11, 16). They have taught you to think you are safe in their parade.

They tell you: The Lord has brought you 'Peace' (Jer 23:17, Matt 10:34). They proclaim peace and safety to everyone who walks with them. It is very pleasant sounding, but it is a fairy tale. **Stubbornly they despise the Lord and His teachings.** They proclaim to the flock: No evil shall come upon you. We know the secrets of the Lord. We alone have heard and perceived His word. No other has marked the word of the Lord and understands (Jer 23:18, Rom 11:1-4).

A lie, says the Lord! I hear what they are telling you. They tell you LIES in my name, lies that come from the deceit of their own heart. **Their intent is to cause you to forget my name.** They encourage you to go to Baal (Jeremiah 23:25-27). Because they have failed to follow me, says the Lord, the way shall be unto them a slippery way in darkness. They shall fall thereon. Come out my people. I will bring evil. My anger shall not cease, says the Lord, until it has performed the thoughts of my heart. In the latter days shall this all be perfectly understood (verse 20). Consider, says God: Even prophets I have **not** sent, when standing in My council and causing the people to hear My words, even they know better! They will turn from evil and from the results which come from taking an evil direction (verse 22).

Behold, I am against the prophets/pastors, says the Lord, who use their tongues for their own ideas and say: "In The Name Of The Lord!" I am against them that tell false dreams, that cause the flock to err by their lies and by being nonchalant with my commands. **They are of no profit to the people at all** (verses 31-32).

When a pastor or prophet says "My commandments are a burden." I will forsake him. If you agree with the false prophet, says the Lord, I will forsake you also (verses 33-34). You will fall among slippery rocks because you say the Lord's rules are a burden. I will utterly forget you. I will forsake you and cast you out of my presence. I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you and a perpetual shame upon the city I gave you and your fathers (verses 38-40).

The parade surely was fun! But then the leaders turned. They went in a wrong direction. Some of us followed. We followed soothing music, Cheshire Cat smiles, and assurances. We heard the warning noise of the waves on rocks. We knew before arriving at cliff's edge the consequences of jumping off a cliff. The people genuinely loved Paul, but things changed over the years after he was gone. Paul warned that secret agendas would arise. Even if motives had at that time

not germinated, apostasy **would** happen (Acts 20:28-31, 36-38).

Did God force any of us, against our will, into the parade? Didn't we hear and recognize the happy sounds ourselves? Did we not come out of a dark house on our own? Was it not **our** choice? We joined the parade because at the time it was the right thing to do. We learned, we grew and we were blessed there. Then the leaders made a wrong turn. Did God applaud their turn? Did God encourage us the marchers to continue to follow other men in the wrong direction? Did God then tell us: Jump? Did He push? But wasn't it God's parade?! Surely, everything is God's doing. Isn't it?

God did not correct the continuing error of a long string of kings of Israel. He showed them the way to walk therein. He counseled them of the outcome for blatant failure. Time and again God admonished the people, but in all that time God never prevented anyone, when it was what they chose, from casting themselves off the edge (Luke 4:9-12). Our errors, or the errors of church leaders are not God's fault.

Sometimes our trials can be attributed to God. The Eternal may have decided His gold needs more refining, or robes need more washing—to state the analogies. Everyone is responsible for ordering their own life. We can choose to follow in the direction that leads to eternal life, or we can stray from God's truth to follow a Siren Song to a high, windswept cliff, and parade to our death on jagged rocks. It's our choice, our choice alone.

The biggest parade route is not always the one that leads to life; the true path is described as "narrow" (Mark 7:13-14). It is the road we take that is all-important, not how many people are on it with us. While the encouragement and fellowship of others is a great joy, it is better to be in a small parade on the right road than in a big parade headed the wrong way.

God has made a road map. It shows

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

the proper route for us to take. God's map shows all the wrong side streets. It tells **who** and **how** we should follow (1Kngs 18:21, John 21:19, 3Jn 11). Without exception, taking a wrong turn leads to a cliff hanger (Matt 7:13-14). **Only a fool never tests the spirits!** (1Jn 4:1.) Nothing is static. It's all up, or down. If a house is not kept up, it will go down. The truth of God builds up (Eph 2:20-22). Man's ideas and customs pull down (Jer 10:3). Unfortunately, the people love to have it so (Isa 30:9-13, 2Tim 4:3).

Return unto the proper route, says the Lord. Why do you plod along zombie-like, refusing to hear the sound of crashing waves, denying what your own eyes and ears plainly tell you? You cling to incredibly twisted and grotesque fairy tales. You are foolish to associate with error. You are even more foolish to follow off a cliff with the rest, like so many Lemmings. You ignore the facts. You stolidly refuse to accept the idea that **you** have made a mistake.

Turn from sin, pleads the Lord. I will welcome you with open arms. Humble yourself. I will be gracious and merciful. Anyone can make a mistake. I made you human, but I am also your advocate with the Father. My shed blood covers your sin. Recognize your error and keep my Father's commands. **His commandments allow you to recognize the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.** Anyone who says the commandments do not have to be kept is a liar (1Jn 2: 1-4). Liars do nothing more than rain heavily on your parade.

The human leaders of a church organization may become corrupt. There is ample history to prove that they can, have, and will! God, however, promises He will never leave us or forsake us as long as we are following **His** parade (Heb 13:5). Depart from evil. Do good and you will live forever (Psalm 37:27). Do not be one of the children of the kingdom, who at the last moment, is rejected and cast into outer darkness (Matt 8:12, Luke 13:24-28, Jude 11-13).

—Robert B. Schimmel

“Ten Reasons”, continued from page 1
many real human beings that have been baptized and learned the truth of the Bible during the last couple years. While there are prophecies of famines of the word, we would not want to be responsible for refusing to teach those that want to learn. We cannot explain to our Father why scriptures such as 1 Peter 3:15 and Matt 28:19-20 are no longer in effect.

The test on the Church is two-fold: it has to do with the truth—will we fall for clever heresy? And, it has to do with government—will we be faithful and wait for Christ to set things right in the WCG?

It is as if God has said, in effect, “Okay, Satan. See my Church? She’s all yours. If you can deceive her, I want to know—I want to see it for myself. And I want to see who is faithful and loyal, too—I want to see who will take the easy way out and leave, and who will endure to the end.

Editor’s Note: The above two paragraphs seem to reveal the author’s principle mistake: he uses the terms WCG and “Church of God” as if they were identical entities. The Church (Greek *Ekklesia* meaning “assembly”) is the “body of Christ” which has “many members”—people possessing the holy spirit (Col 1:13-18, 1Cor 12:12, Rom 8:9). The apostle John sent letters to seven congregations that were within a few days travel but had a great diversity of doctrines and problems (Rev 2 & 3). In our day, we can find hundreds of thousands of men and women who believe in keeping the ten commandments (including the Sabbath) and accepting Jesus (or Yeshua) of Nazareth as their savior—but have never attended the Worldwide Church of God. If you doubt this, get the *Directory of Sabbath-observing Groups*, 405-227-3200 or Rd 1 Box 222, Fairview, OK 73737.

Does anyone believe that a man who was baptized, kept the Sabbath, and strove to live by “every word of God” for his whole life will not be among the firstfruits because he never heard of Herbert Armstrong or the WCG?

There is simply *no* biblical example of *leaving* where God is working! You can look at the temple, Israel, the Church, etc.—it doesn’t matter—you *will not find* an example of God telling us to “leave” because the going got

rough. Or because the leadership became corrupt. But there are *many* examples of *waiting* on God; of submitting where possible to a corrupt government; of enduring hardship while *looking to God* for deliverance!

Editor’s Note: “If anyone teaches otherwise... who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. **From such withdraw yourself!**” (1Tim 6:3,5).

“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us**” (2Thes 3:6).

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, **do not receive him** into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds” (2Jn 10-11).

About 600 men left Saul’s government to join David (2Sam 22:2, 23:13). The priests and Levites who rejected the idolatry of Jeroboam **left** the nation of Israel and worshiped God correctly in Judah, even though “God was still working” with Israel for hundreds of years. A few righteous men **left** the false teachings of the appointed King of Israel to keep the Passover according to the commandment with a different group--Judah (2Chr 30:11,27).

Our Savior often spoke against and did not obey the government of his day, even though the Eternal had established it through Moses and was still working through it. (Matt 23, Mark 7, Luke 11, John 11:49-52)

Imagine what would happen if all of those faithful to the *truth* were—instead of *leaving*—just as faithful to the *Church!* What a *message* that would send to Pasadena—and to God!

Editor’s Note: Again, this is assuming the “true Church” is only the WCG. If people were completely loyal to the WCG, Pasadena could have implemented all of their Protestant-like doctrines years ago and could still expect full support. If everyone were loyal to the true *Ekklesia* (the body of spirit-led believers), they would continue to boldly teach the same Truths that the first century believers did! (2Tim 4:1-5, Acts 5:29)

Make no mistake; *none* of the splinter groups are God’s solution to the problems in the WCG! That is *not* how God is “working things out.” There is absolutely *no* scriptural evidence that

God has commissioned these new churches; rather they are *human attempts* to solve the problems created by the WCG leadership. The fact is, these splinter groups are nothing more than “daughters” of the Church—they are the “woman’s seed” (see Rev. 12:17).

Editor’s Note: There is no scriptural evidence that God commissioned any human organization! Herbert Armstrong left one of the branches of the Church of God Seventh Day because he wanted to teach the identity of modern-day Israel and did not want to preach unclean meats to the unconverted. If this was a “valid” reason for leaving an organization, then the more-significant doctrinal changes of today must be even better reasons to leave. If we say that Herbert Armstrong had the right to leave because he was being used to start a big powerful “work”, how can we know that some of these other groups will never become a big work? If correct doctrinal teaching is what makes an organization “God’s Church,” then there are dozens of organizations today that are closer to Herbert Armstrong’s doctrines than the WCG.

What is happening in the WCG is God’s problem! And he *always* corrects problems at their *cause*—he doesn’t “treat the symptoms.” he either brings about repentance, or he removes the *source* of the problem. And he *will*—very soon now—deal with the leadership in Pasadena!

Editor’s Note: It is also the problem of the members. There are numerous commands and principles in the scriptures whereby we will be judged. While the Eternal certainly has all power and does not “treat the symptoms,” we need only look at the Bible or history to see that he lets many problems continue for dozens or hundreds of years. Bad leaders prevailed for the great majority of Israel’s and Judah’s history. Numerous “church” groups went astray and continued to teach false doctrines for hundreds of years.

That is what we’re waiting for—a *miracle*. For God to step in and say, “Okay, Satan, that’s enough. Now I see it all—now I see where everybody stands—I see their spiritual condi-

tion.” The test will then be over; God will replace the leadership in Pasadena, and begin to “rebuild” and *heal* the Church. Those who have “fallen” for the heresy will then be able to *repent*; and those who demonstrated a lack of faith and loyalty will also have to *repent* of their leaving where God *was* and *is* working.

The whole Church—*through this trial*—will be “made ready.” By the time God takes his church to the place of safety (which is very soon after this trial), we will have been thoroughly *humbled*, we will be *teachable*, and we will be *truly united* as one body.

It is obviously beyond the scope of

Servants’ News had an hour telephone conversation with the man who wrote this article and the material listed at right. He was quite willing to consider other views while defending his own views from the scriptures. *Friends of the Brethren* encourages each person to act according to their own faith and understanding of the Bible (Phil 2:12, Rom 13:23).

this short letter to prove anything to anyone. But there *are* passages of scripture that reveal in considerable detail just *what* the WCG is going through. Those passages reveal *why* this is happening, what our *response* should be, *how* this will all end, and *when*!

If you print this letter (and I hope you will), please do not publish my name. Why? Because I want to remain a part of the WCG—I don’t want to be disfellowshipped. Just end it with...

—holding fast in Meridian, MS

Editor’s Note: There were times that many of us wanted our names withheld from our writing because we were afraid of being put out. However, after a while we realized that we were not fearing any scripture that told us to stay in a certain corporation--there is none. We were fearful of losing our friends that were told to avoid us and in some cases we were afraid of losing our jobs. The man born blind in Acts 9:1-34 stood up for the truth even though he was put out of the synagogue--a place where “God was working” (John 18:20) and probably the only place the man could attend each Sabbath.

Ultimately, we must repent of disloyal-

ty to the Eternal, not of disloyalty to men. A man cannot “put us out” of the Book of Life (Phil 4:3, Rev 3:5).

P.S.: I am assuming that you are interested in knowing more about the way many of us still in the WCG feel. So, I am including some material that explains our position in greater detail. Hope you find it interesting reading. Feel free to contact me (or visit Meridian) if you want to know more.

Editor’s Note: Thank you very much for your letter, we were very glad to know how you and others are feeling. We have read your 46-page paper, *The Woman and the Serpent* and agree with much of it but not some of its conclusions. It certainly represents a diligent effort to study the scriptures. People interested in this paper can send a separately stamped envelope to *Friends of the Brethren* and we will forward it to the author.

We have printed the paper, *Ten Reasons Why You Should Not Leave the Worldwide Church of God*, with comments below:

1. God never instructs an individual to *leave* his Church. Look at the letters to the Churches in Rev. 2-3. Christ never says to leave the Church where he put you—but he *does* tell us to repent where necessary and to hold on to that which we have that is good (Rev 2:5,16,25; 3:2-3,11,18-20). Consider the Laodicean era—it is *weak, lukewarm*. But does God tell those individuals to *leave*, to go FIND ANOTHER CHURCH?

No—he tells them to *repent*.

We have already covered the many scriptures showing the commands to withdraw from false teachers (1Tim 6:3,5, 2Thes 3:6, 2Jn 10-11). Church history shows that people who did not withdraw from the lying Apostles in Revelation 2:2 probably became members of the Greek Orthodox Church. How could Ephesus (or any congregation) “repent and do the first works” if they think they must continue to listen to lying apostles?

2. We, the Philadelphia Church, are told to HOLD FAST TO THAT WHICH

Continued on next page

WE HAVE (Rev 3:11). It's as if someone—a man—was TRYING TO TAKE IT FROM US!

What are we to hold on to—what do we have?

Verse 8: we have *kept his word*—it is the truth, his word that we are to hold on to. The word *kept* in the Greek means *to guard* the way a warden would watch over someone. And we are to do so with *patience* (verse 10).

By leaving the Church you tell Christ, “I can’t hold on any longer—my patience is gone. I’m tired of *guarding* the truth—I need to remove myself to a Church where there is no struggle.”

Those who gave up jobs and life-long friends to continue to hear and teach the truth certainly went through a struggle! There are thousands of member’s children and new converts still need correct teaching. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 shows Christ is the only foundation: should not we build on what we believe are his teachings, rather than what we believe is heresy?

3. By leaving the Church of God, you’re telling Christ that he isn’t *big enough* to handle Joe Tkach.

Did Christ ever say that He was solely responsible for removing false teachers? Look what he told Israel: “If there arises among you a prophet...saying ‘Let us go after other gods which you have not known [a trinity?], and serve them, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams [leave him!], for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.... But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death....If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’...you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; but you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people” (Deut 13:1-3,5,8-9). The Eternal instructed the people, not the priests or the rulers to make a very permanent separation between themselves and false teachers. Today, we do not run the civil government

and administer penalties, but we can control who we listen to.

We are in a TRIAL FOR OUR FAITH (1Pet 1:7). The *purpose* of a trial is to produce in us *good fruit*, so that we might be found with “praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (verse 7).

But a trial has no value whatsoever if you pull out! For fruit to be produced you must endure trials to their natural, God-directed *end* (Matt 24:13). By *leaving* the Church, you tell God that YOU DON’T ACCEPT THE TRIAL he has *allowed* to come upon the Church. You want *out*—you don’t care about the fruit the trial is supposed to bring.

Many WCG ministers were told to preach the “new teachings” or they would be disfellowshipped. There are numerous scriptures condemning those who teach lies (Matt 5:19, 18:6, Luke 12:47, James 3:1), but the Bible says nothing about corporate organizations. Many of these men have worked for the WCG all of their lives and have no other marketable skill. Nearly all of them will assure you that carnally, the easiest choice is to simply teach whatever they are told to. Quitting their life-long job to start a new career or to work for a start-up church organization that may not have enough money to pay them was the biggest trial of their lives.

5. What would David do if he were in the WCG today? Saul had GOD-ORDAINED AUTHORITY over Israel, yet he was *corrupt* before God. But David did not *pull out* and say, “this can’t be God’s nation (church). Look how God’s anointed (Saul-Tkach) has become corrupt. I’ll go find myself another nation (church).”

No, David WAITED PATIENTLY FOR GOD TO ACT—*always showing respect toward Saul!*

As David did not try to depose Saul, we do not believe any man should try to depose the leaders of current organizations. However, we were somewhat amazed at the above paragraphs in light of what the Bible says. David (1Sam 26:21, 28:1-2), Jonathan (1Sam 19:1-2), Michal (1Sam 19:11-13), the Priests (1Sam 22:13), and Saul’s servants (1Sam 22:17) all disobeyed Saul to do what was right.

David accepted men who were discontent with Saul’s corrupt government, there

is no record that he sent any of them back to Saul (1Sam 22:2). Indeed, David spent a year and four months in another country [church?] to get away from Saul (1Sam 27:1-7). He still loved the Eternal and his people [church?] even though he was called a “runaway” (1Sam 25:10). He was wise enough to see that if he stayed too close to Saul, it eventually would be the death of him!

6. Get the big picture. Don’t be so caught in the *fact* that HERESY IS BEING TAUGHT—and that an *apostasy* is taking place—that YOU OVERLOOK THE BIG PICTURE. Because what is happening to the WCG was *prophesied!*

Re-study Matt. 24, Dan 12: Rev 3:6-13; Rev 12:15-17; etc. These passages have a spiritual application that relates to what is happening to the Church today. And part of that prophecy is that you *hold on and endure patiently* and let Christ himself show you what to do!

And be of good courage—those prophecies also tell of our *deliverance* and *reward!*

When we read the histories of Sabbath-keeping congregations, it appears that there were many apostacies and this one is not so unusual. Sometimes apostacizing organizations completely die out and sometimes they continue for years, teaching a mixture of truth and error.

7. If you leave, where will you go? How do you *determine* where Christ would have you go—Flurry, Meredith, GTA, or another? These all base their teachings on what Mr. Armstrong taught. What will you base your decision on?

What *about* these Churches which have pulled away? Look at Rev 12:17. Those who pull away and form their own churches are the *seed*—the daughters, offspring (NIV)—of the *woman*. They keep God’s commandments, but they are *not* the woman—THEY ARE HER SEED. In other words, just as the great harlot church of Revelation 17 has daughters—who *went out in protest*—so does the Church of God! And some of their leaders—however sincere—left in order to “draw away disciples” (Acts 20:30).

The Church is certainly pictured as a woman, the bride of Christ (Eph 5).

However, she is a virgin (2Cor 11:2), so she does not have daughters. The one "True Church" is unified by the holy spirit (Eph 4:2-7), harlot churches are unified by organizations--they do have daughter organizations.

Revelation 12:17 is more accurately translated in the KJV: "And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" The word "daughter" is never mentioned in Rev 12:17, only "seed." Seed is used as a symbol of the Word of the Eternal being sown among people that will hear (Luke 8:11, 2Cor 9:10)

As we understand this scripture, the "woman" is the congregation of converted people which has been protected. The remnant are people that have had the seed [the Word] sown among them but are not converted yet. They keep the commandments and have many correct doctrines, but they were never a part of the woman. When persecution arises, most people in this condition will stop obeying the commandments, hence only a "remnant" or "part" of these people will be visible and persecuted.

While it is obvious that some men enjoy the preeminence of being the head of a church organization, Acts 30:20 applies to very few of them. The whole verse 20:30 says: "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." Many of the heads of these organizations were put out, they did not plan to leave themselves. Most of them are not "speaking perverse things," but as you imply, preaching a message very similar to that of Herbert Armstrong.

8. Jude 3 says we are to **CONTEND**—*fight*—for the faith once delivered—**NOT RUN!** If you *leave*, YOU TAKE YOURSELF OUT OF THE ARENA. Leaving the Church is not standing up for the truth—it is taking the *easy way out*. The *only place* you can "contend" for the faith is here in the WCG!

Look at verses 22-23. Part of contending for the faith is to help others—**TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

Read Ezekiel 22:25-28—could it be applied spiritually to the Church? We *are* spiritual Israel! Look at verse 30. God is looking for men to stand in the

gap for him!

Are you willing?

Leaving a corrupt organization is not taking oneself out of the arena, but leaving the camp of the enemy. When we were in his camp, our work was limited to quiet encouragement and anonymous letters. Most of the publications and tapes exposing these false teachings and showing the truth have been produced by people who have left the big organization.

We agree with your use of Ezekiel 22 here. A person that "stands in the gap" is one that is exposed--can be seen--but fights to keep the enemy out of a gap or weak spot in the walls of a protected area. Men who are teaching truth to their congregations (no matter what organization they are in) are keeping the enemy (false doctrine) out and protecting the people inside. Military men will acknowledge the value of a resistance fighter--a person who secretly remains within the territory of the enemy to help out as he can. But they also know that wars are not won by resistance fighters alone: there must be strong men to stand in the gaps--to visibly face the enemy, resist, and win!

9. If you *leave*, are you WILLING TO TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY of pulling *others* away with you? Could you cause another—a *weak brother*—to stumble? Are you that *sure* of yourself? Others will see your example and will be effected!

A good point, but both sides must be considered. What happens when a weak brother sees long-time members sit through many sermons about false doctrines. Will he not conclude that these new teachings must be acceptable? Are you not responsible for this example?

10. Finally, a very important example from scripture concerning government. In Matt 23, Christ told his followers that the Scribes and the Pharisees sat in Moses' *seat*. That is, they had **GOD-ORDAINED authority!** They were over what was the "Church in the Wilderness"—yet Christ said that they were a hypocritical, *corrupt* government! They were not administering God's government God's way—yet they still held the office.

But, notice how Christ instructed his disciples. They were to be **IN SUBJECTION TO THEM**—"Do whatever they

bid you"—but, he added: "Don't do as they do." In other words, **FOLLOW THAT GOVERNMENT** as far as you can, *but not to the point of sin*.

The same is true in the WCG. We **MUST** follow the *corrupt* government God has *allowed* over the WCG as far as we can, **STOPPING SHORT OF SIN**. And *nothing* Mr. Tkach has taught us—*so far*—has caused us to sin.

He *cannot* make us sin. But we must continue to be on guard! Grace-turned-to-license is being taught—don't let down and begin to compromise!

And don't *leave!*

The Eternal certainly worked through the government in Israel. The leaders maintained the written scriptures and other significant instruction (Matt 2:23 and Jude 14 record ancient prophecies not written in the Old Testament). When they read the scriptures, taught righteous tradition, and made just judgments, they were serving the people.

However, during the first few weeks of their ministry, a conflict arose between the commands of the Messiah and the commands of a corrupt government. The Messiah said "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of he age. Amen" (Matt 28:19-20). "And the high priest asked them, saying, 'Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name?'" (Acts 5:27-28). "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men'" (Acts 5:29).

The apostles were commanded to teach the truth and they were going to do it, corrupt government or not. The apostles were commanded to teach everything that was commanded of them--so if we are their students, we must learn to teach others also. Our Saviour will be there to help us until the "end of the age." We have seen the commands to separate ourselves from those who teach false doctrine. We can see how those who help false teachers are "partakers of their evil deeds" (2 Jn 10-11). Is it a sin to financially support or do volunteer work for organizations teaching great heresy?

--comments by Norman S. Edwards

Not as fast... as in the past... but it will last.

Since we switched to bulk mailing with envelopes, we have had no reports of issues delivered in poor condition. However, some people have reported delivery times of three weeks. While the slowness is not good, we think it is offset by the greatly reduced cost and the better delivery conditions.

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many people as want it at the lowest practical cost. The loose-leaf format is inexpensive and makes it easy for you to copy all or part of this publication to send to others. Take your choice of a 3-ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

"Letters & Responses", from page 16

WHEN are the brethren in any of God's true Churches going to STOP judging their brothers in CHRIST? The ETERNAL GOD said "All Judgment is given unto the Son" (John 5:22).

Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgement ye judge, you shall be judged" (Matt 7:1&2).

I have yet to meet a brother or sister in Christ, minister or lay member whom God has given the right to judge in matters of Salvation.

Sorry to see that the membership in the Global Church of God still has a judging problem.

The membership in all called-out bodies of Christ really ought to give judgment back to Christ and attend to becoming positive and productive Christians in what we are called to do: Preach the Gospel—NOT JUDGE.

—A.D.L., New Mexico

RESPONSE: Thank you for your obser-

vation. We certainly agree that congregations should be teaching the truth and not judging each other. Please do not "judge" an organization by a letter from one person in it. The following letter, as well as many other letters we have received show that other individuals in the GCG are very understanding of other groups.

—Norman S. Edwards

Harmony Without Judging

LETTER:

August 9, 1995

Norm—

Regarding our telephone conversation last week, enclosed is a contribution to support the work God is doing through Friends of the Brethren.

My wife and I enjoy reading your articles which are refreshing and unpretentious. We find your approach toward God's many scattered children to be brotherly and non-judgmental. We have friends in the WCG, PCG, GCG (where we attend), and UCG

and you'd be amazed how many believe theirs is "God's only true Church." Even our friends who have left Worldwide to Stand up for the truth are caught up in organizations of men rather than remembering they're members of God's Church. We've passed out some of your literature to our friends. Hopefully, we can all fellowship together in harmony without judging one another.

Keep up the good work!

Take care—

J.B., Lynchburg, VA

RESPONSE: Thank you for your suggestion. We have made a note to produce an article on competition for sometime in the future. We agree that all of the various "church" groups should not fight with each other, but strive to live and teach a way of peace. If the members do not have enough understanding and holy spirit to determine the best place for them to learn and serve, then how can they ever be trusted to stay with the truth in the Millennium?

—Norman S. Edwards

Literature List

Friends of the Brethren still intends to make a wide range of literature available from a variety of sources. While we have received a number of worthwhile items, we have spent most of our time handling requests for the literature we have and answering written and telephone questions.

However, we have had several sound offers for help and we hope to be able to make many more things available after the Feast this year. Thank you for your patience in this matter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We want to send this newsletter only to people who want it! If you are not interested, please send us a postcard or give us a call: 501-872-1003, fax: 501-872-1004, eMail: 75260.1603@Compuserve.com