

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 2, No. 9

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

November 1996

Marriage &

Many papers have been written and much advice has been given on marriage and divorce. Yet it remains a point of controversy in nearly every church organization: How do they decide who is to be permitted to marry, to divorce and to remarry? Most of the controversy and heartache has been caused by decisions made on a false premise. This article may be a shock to some people, but the Biblical and historical truth of the matter is undeniable and easy to confirm.

Women Not Inferior to Men

Before we get into the "shocking" part, we must understand the basic scriptures that explain what men and women are:

So God created man [Hebrew 'adam] in His own

WHERE ARE THE 12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL TODAY?

"By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply **your descendants** as the **stars of the heaven** and as the **sand which is on the seashore**; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies" (Gen 22:16-17).

This story continues in Genesis chapters 26, 48 and 49 where the blessing is passed on to Isaac and then on to Jacob and his



image; in the image of God He created him; **male and female** He created **them**. Then God blessed **them**, and God said to **them**, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:26-28)

While Genesis 2 shows that Adam was created before Eve, these verses unmistakably show that the Eternal's intention was to create male and female from the beginning. We notice here that man is not given dominion over women (or other men either), but they are **both** given dominion over the ground and the animals. For much of history, in many societies (including some who profess Christianity) women are treated like property—like so many animals or possessions. The men who understood the Bible and acted this way will

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sons. Abraham, the **father of the faithful**, was not promised a small group of righteous or religious men for descendants; he was promised a large **quantity** of descendants—especially in "the latter days." Where do we find the promise of this quantity of offspring fulfilled? Is the Creator of the Universe able to bring to pass his promise of fulfillment in a way that we can understand? Are these prophecies fulfilled by the modern day nation of Israel and the few thousands of people in the Near East that she officially recognizes as part of the "lost ten tribes?"

When Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are raised from the dead (Matt 22:31-32), and learn the overview of the history of the world, will the Eternal be embarrassed to point out their descendants as a little group of people that occasionally had minor influence on the course of world history? Or will He point to the

great nations such as the United States of America, the British Empire and Northwestern Europe—the countries primarily responsible for the spread of the Bible, education, agriculture and technology throughout much of the world? While these countries have also spread a large amount of sin throughout the world (as prophesied), it is difficult to imagine any countries that would better fulfill the promises to the

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Is Thanksgiving Only for . . .



. . . Turkeys?

Some brethren have raised the question as to whether or not it is right to observe the USA's Thanksgiving holiday. Is it a day honoring the Eternal? Is it a human holiday with little religious significance? Is it "Pagan"?

The holiday has not been observed by most believers through history, and most brethren out of the USA do not observe it now. There is no requirement to observe it; we should not judge anyone who chooses not to observe it.

The Eternal gave festivals related to crop harvests (Ex 23:16), so the idea of having a festival to thank the Eternal for good crops is not wrong. The major reason for Thanksgiving is to thank the Eternal for plenty to eat: we are commanded to do this (Deut 8:10). Some Pagan elements may have been originally a part of the first Thanksgiving, or they may have crept in to later practice. We should avoid those as we are commanded not to worship our Father with Pagan worship practices, but we need not refrain from correct worship practices just because the Pagans use them, too.

Our Savior participated in the Feast of Dedication or Hannukah (John 10:22), a Festival of thanks to the Eternal that is not specifically commanded in the Bible. Candles are lit in this ceremony. Pagans light candles in their ceremonies. But our Messiah was not afraid to be in the temple at this time; He used it to speak an important message. Likewise, today, we can use Thanksgiving to let our light shine and show our faith in the Eternal and our thanks for His blessings.

From 1 Corinthians 8 we learn that it is acceptable to eat meat offered to idols provided that it does not offend brethren who are weak. There is nothing wrong with using something that a Pagan touched (and the Pagans have touched Thanksgiving), as long as we do not participate in the Pagan practices. With holidays such as Christmas and Easter, the **day** is wrong, the **purpose** is wrong, and **nearly all of the practices** are wrong—there is nothing for a converted person to do. With Thanksgiving, the purpose is right, the day is irrelevant (we give thanks for our country in general, not to idolize the First Thanksgiving) and the significant practices (cooking and eating) are good.

If your conscience does not let you keep Thanksgiving, or if there are people who would be offended by you doing it, then please do not keep it (Rom 14:23). But, do not condemn those who do. And those who do keep it must not condemn those who do not. We should still be able to treat each other as brethren. We are to be recognized as His disciples by our love for one another, not by our precise adherence to a specific set of practices (John 13:35, Rom 14:1-8).
—Norman S. Edwards

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

We believe the gospel should be given freely—you may copy this newsletter and give it to others. *Servants' News* has no financial ties with other organizations, but is financed by gifts and donations to our ministry. We have not received IRS tax exempt status, but the IRS allows some charitable deductions without such status (see IRS Publication 557, p. 16, col. 1).

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Most scripture quotations are from the New

In Transition Concept to Continue

Servants' News has had many inquiries about the self-announced closing of the *In Transition* newspaper. We have been asked if we would try to increase our news of the various organizations in an effort to replace their function, but we are much happier to announce that Dixon Cartwright, the present Editor of *In Transition*, plans to continue the concept on his own.

We feel it is very important that there be multiple sources of news for brethren, just like there are multiple sources of news available in the world. If multiple, truly independent publications report the same issue the same way, the reader can be relatively assured he is understanding the truth of the matter. If multiple publications report the same event in different ways, it may be confusing, but at least the reader will realize that one or more of the publications is biased or fabricating. When there is only one news source, it is hard for readers to know whether it is

accurate or not. People interested in the truth being told will not mind multiple news sources. People interested in controlling others will want a single news source—which they control.

In addition to accuracy, multiple sources also increase the coverage. Editors vary in what they consider important. One publication will cover items that another will not. Since most “Church of God” groups give members information about only their own group, it is important that we have several independent publications.

Since *In Transition* does not attempt to “preach the Gospel” to new people, organize services or take specific theological positions, it is not a “ministry” in the same way that *Servants' News* is. We believe that charging a fixed fee for a subscription is appropriate. We hope that all interested people will subscribe to Dixon Cartwright’s new publication.

—Norman S. Edwards

The New Publication Plan:

by Dixon Cartwright

I am currently working with the founder and publisher of *In Transition*, John Robinson. He suggested that I start up another publication—which I would want to be very similar to *In Transition*—the month after *In Transition* ends, February, 1997. It would have a different name but very similar content.

We would use a Texas printer, who can print slightly larger tabloid pages, so the only significant change, besides the altered name, would be a taller page and a larger (easier to read) type size, which we’ve had many requests for.

In Transition is the brainchild of John Robinson, and it's taken a lot of work and a team effort that in Indiana and Texas has included Linda Smith, Mac Overton, Scott Ashley, Shaun and Rachel Venish, Scott and Peggy Moss, Kimberly McCullough, Scott Smith and many people all over the world who have contributed material for publication.

Others, such as Leon Walker, Don Ward, Ewin Barnett, Mark Kaplan, Darris McNeely, Dave Havir and Ellis Stewart, have served as regular writers and contributors.

One of the few people who could have spearheaded and succeeded at something like *In Transition* is John Robinson. I'm pleased to say that John has told me he would still be on the staff of, and a regular contributor to, the successor publication as an editor and writer. I think with his help we can make a go of it. I am extremely grateful to John for his assistance and for this opportunity.

John for various reasons prefers to end *In Transition* per se, which is what we are doing. What I will probably do is mail the first issue of the successor publication to the entire mailing list of *In Transition*, then invite people to subscribe.

The writers and editorial people would still be geographically scattered.

Who is Dixon Cartwright?

Dixon Cartwright, 49, lives in Big Sandy, Texas, with his wife, Linda, and two children, son Trey, 16, and daughter Jamie, 13. He is a member of the United Church of God, Big Sandy (separately incorporated from, but affiliated with UCG-AIA in Arcadia, California).

Born in Atoka, Oklahoma, he is a 1969 graduate of Ambassador College, Big Sandy. He worked after graduation for the college and church until 1978, including as a founding staff member of the Worldwide News in Big Sandy and later Pasadena, from 1973 until it was temporarily discontinued in 1978.

In 1978 he founded and operated for 12 years a typographic and graphics business in Big Sandy and Tyler, which he sold in 1990. He bought and published a weekly newspaper, The Big Sandy & Hawkins Journal, from 1985 to 1988, when he sold it to a newspaper chain.

He served on the mass-communication faculty of Ambassador College in 1982 and from 1991 to 1994. He was faculty adviser to the students who produced the college newspaper, The Portfolio.

He has a bachelor's degree in theology and communications from Ambassador College (1969) and a master's in journalism from Texas A&M University-Commerce (1991).

He has served as editor of *In Transition* since its first issue, in May 1995.

For the past several years he has once again been self-employed, operating an editorial-service business out of an office in his home.

The main thing that would change is that more of the publication would be in Texas, and the paper would be printed and mailed from Texas (no longer from Indiana.)

Tentative name of the paper (subject to change): *News of the Churches of God*, with the subhead: *Incorporating In Transition*.

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"Marriage..." from page 1

have to answer for it in the judgement. Women were created on the same level with man. She was created from him:

And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."... And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man" (Gen 2:18,21-23).

The NKJV does a reasonable translation of the kind of helper Eve was: "comparable." The Hebrew also conveys the idea of "in contrast to him" or "to balance him." Although Eve was created to help Adam (and not the other way around), we do not find him being given authority over her at this point. The two were intended to work together. After they both partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy **sorrow** and thy conception; in **sorrow** thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in **sorrow** shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Gen 3:16-19, KJV).

Adam and Eve had chosen to go their own way, rather than to accept the Eternal's way of love. This scripture is not commanding men and women to take on new roles as much as it is a

prophecy of what would happen to society as a result of living the wrong way. The only thing that was cursed, was the ground—not Eve. Since men would probably fight against the creation rather than work with it, the Eternal "armed" it to defend itself. (thorns and thistles would grow). Men would have to sweat and work much harder and have much sorrow in the process. Much of what each man would work for would be destroyed by war, theft, vandalism and sometimes a man's own vices. We use the KJV here because it accurately translates the Hebrew showing that it was the same "sorrow"—not specific physical pain—that would come upon **both men and women** because of this sin. Similarly, women work to bear and raise children, only to see them destroyed in evil societies or sent off to some distant war. Women would desire their husbands even though their husbands would rule over them—often unreasonably.

Men were not created "superior" to women. This scripture is no more of a command for men to rule women than it is a command for men to sweat when they work. Some foolish men believe that this scripture gives them a right to mistreat their wives as a continuation of Eve's punishment. The only marital instruction to Adam in the above scripture is to reject his wife's request when he knows that she is wrong. When men begin thinking that they are innately superior to women, the results often turn out like Adolf Hitler's government in Germany: Since Germans were superior to other races, it was acceptable to enslave or kill the other races. Similarly, if men believe they are superior to women, then they believe their sins against women do not matter—or at least they are not all that bad.

Even right now, there are men who believe that once they have "gotten" a wife, they can do whatever they want. Until that belief is changed, there is little that anyone can do to make that marriage happy.

Men Lead With Our Savior's Love

While the above problem has caused much trouble from Adam until now, the

opposite problem exists today. Many women refuse to recognize the many clear scriptures that make the husband the head of the family. The most straight-forward two are:

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God (1Cor 11:3).

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body (Eph 5:22-23).

Many women ignore these scriptures altogether. Many men do not consider what they mean. Some men feel that being the head means that their wife must obey their every command and must do nothing without their approval. But look at Revelation 2 & 3, the history of "the Church" (whatever you consider that to be), and "the Church" today. Do we find a group of people scrupulously following her husband, or do we find people making mistakes and learning from them? It appears that He gives His wife (His church) a lot of free reign, but corrects her when she gets far off the track. Revelation 19:7 says "for the marriage of the Lamb has come, His wife has made **herself** ready."

Too many men feel the number one priority in their marriage is "making their wife submit." Actually, the most common Biblical commands to husbands are to love their wives and to be good examples and righteous leaders. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). **If men are to lead like their Savior, they will do what is best for their wife whether she submits or not.** The Bible commands the wife to submit, but there are no commands to the husband to "force his wife to submit". The qualifications for an overseer ("bishop") require that a man's children be in subjection, but not his wife (1Tim 3:1-7).

The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 is submissive, yet involved in much business activity of her own. How can a husband be head of his wife, yet allow both to live interesting, fulfilling and dynamic lives together without "stepping on" each other. Some of the answer is found here:

If she [a wife] vowed in her hus-

One big cause of marriage problems: People seek a mate by playing together, but most of married life is spent working together.

band's house, or bound herself by an agreement with an oath, and her husband heard it, and made no response to her and did not overrule her, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement by which she bound herself shall stand. But if her husband truly made them void on the day he heard them, then whatever proceeded from her lips concerning her vows or concerning the agreement binding her, it shall not stand; her husband has made them void, and the LORD will release her. Every vow and every binding oath to afflict her soul, her husband may confirm it, or her husband may make it void. Now if her husband makes no response whatever to her from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or all the agreements that bind her; he confirms them, because he made no response to her on the day that he heard them. But if he does make them void after he has heard them, then he shall bear her guilt (Num 30:10-15).

Many dismiss these scriptures because they do not make "vows" to the Eternal in the same way that was common in the Old Testament. But it also says "or bound herself by an agreement with an oath." This is talking about any type of contract or oral agreement that would commit the family. The wife had full rights to make commitments, just like the husband. However, hers are subject to approval by the husband—in the day that he hears about them. If he agrees or says nothing, he is bound by the agreement also. If he voids the agreement, it becomes void. Obviously, if a woman is continually making commitments that her husband decides to revoke, it will be embarrassing for both of them. If her commitments are unreasonable, we hope she will stop making them. If he is unreasonably rejecting her wise decisions, we hope he will change and learn to let her decisions carry.

Following these instructions will help eliminate many of the arguments that occur in marriages. If a wife believes her husband is making a poor decision, his wife should tell him about it. If he concludes she is right, she has helped the family; if he does not hear good advice, the results are clearly his responsibility. There is no reason to nag him, he has heard and he is responsible. If the wife makes a poor decisions, the

husband should not "nag" her either; he should either reverse the decision, or be quiet about it. He has had his opportunity and he is responsible. If a woman "sneaks" around her husband and makes important decisions without giving him a chance to say "no", then he cannot be responsible. This will cause arguments about who is responsible for which of the things that went wrong. If the wife does her part in asking for his decision, then it is the husband's fault if things go wrong.

Fortunately, many consumer laws in the USA and some other countries allow all consumers to return products and rescind contracts for a specified number of days. Families can use these laws to implement the principles in Numbers 30. In cases where a contract or purchase cannot be easily revoked by a husband, the only apparent solution is for wives to check with their husbands first.

The above principles apply to major and long-term commitments: jobs, houses, major purchases, etc. The Eternal gave this structure not because men know how to make decisions and women do not, but so families could work with a unity of purpose—so the wife does not decide to move to Washington while the husband moves to Georgia. There are obviously whole areas of a marriage where a wife has complete responsibility and there is no need for "checking with hubby."

What is a Marriage?

So why are we talking so much about contracts and financial arrangements? Aren't marriages started by love, romance, flowers and a big ceremony with a minister? Maybe they are, but this concept is in defiance of the Bible, history and logic.

Most married people will spend most of their lives working together: going to jobs, changing diapers, teaching and playing with their children, fixing and decorating their house, shopping for essential items at a good price, etc. Yet the way most people try to meet a mate is not by working together, but playing together: going to parties and going on "dates." Our culture paints the ideal date

as someone who wears stylish clothes, looks "sexy," drives a nice car, acts "cool," takes the other to fabulous (expensive) places, and says the "right" things at the right time. If it is all a "put on" show and everything was purchased with borrowed money, our society accepts it—that person is still a "good" date. Our divorce rate is understandable when so many people go into marriages with primarily entertainment experience and do not think about **working** together until later. The issue is further compounded by people dating and marrying primarily to satisfy sexual desires and not to become responsible spouses and parents. While romantic attraction may sound sweet and wonderful, but it is not a successful basis for marriage. **It is the icing on the cake, not the cake.**

During the time that the Bible was written, marriages were made by a contract—largely an economic relationships. The contracts usually specified mutual support and cooperation, a sexual relationship, and responsibility for the children who would be produced. The contracts would specify whether or not the espoused were virgins. The contracts were often between the parents of the couple getting married. It was also fairly common for husbands to sign their own contracts. It was much less common for wives to sign their own contracts—if their parents were not available, a brother or other relative would usually sign for her. Why?

It was not because women were incompetent! The contract was with someone else on behalf of the wife for her protection. Since the husband has the ultimate decision-making power of the family and is usually physically stronger, he is by far the most likely one to break the contract (mistreat his wife). If a husband does not live up to his contract, the person who signed on behalf of the wife should make an effort to enforce it.

In some cases, penalties were built into the contracts: a man who did not take care of his wife might have to pay her father. Deuteronomy 22:13-21 gives one instance where a father was required to negotiate on behalf of his married daughter. On the

What is the role of the minister? We can search the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation along with a multitude of history books and get only one answer: . . .

other hand, contracts also limited parents from interfering in marriages unnecessarily—if their child's spouse was keeping the broad provisions of the contract, they had no right to interfere.

While the following verse is dealing with a slave taken as a wife, notice the contractual nature of these marriage laws. If the man did not do his duty, the wife was free to leave:

If he [the husband] takes another wife, he shall not diminish her [the first wife's] food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money (Ex 21:10-11).

Genesis 34:8-17 gives some of the details of the marriage agreement worked out between the sons of Jacob and Hamor for the marriage of Shechem and Dinah. While this agreement came to an abrupt end (Simeon and Levi killed Hamor, Shechem, and all the other men of the city), it shows the wide latitude of specifications that could go into a marriage agreement.

Marriage agreements were often signed well before the marriage was consummated. This was known as the "betrothal" or "engagement" period. Once betrothed, the couple is often referred to as "husband" and "wife" and many of the marriage laws already apply to the couple— plus some special laws (see February 1996 *Servants' News*, pp 5-8). The marriage was considered consummated by the sexual union of husband and wife. This event was marked by a big feast with friends and family present—sometimes the entire town. The bride and groom usually spent a week together in a specially prepared chamber—sometimes the feast lasted that long. (If there were some physical problem that prevented the couple from having normal physical relations, they could still have a marriage—Joseph was told to keep Mary a virgin until Jesus was born, but they were considered married—Matt 1:24-25.)

One type of marriage agreement is illustrated by Jacob's marriage. The agreement was made when Jacob agreed to work seven years for Rachel. Seven years later, we pick up the story:

Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my **wife**, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her" [consummate the marriage]. And Laban gathered

together all the men of the place and made a feast. Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?" And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. "Fulfill **her week**, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years." Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also (Gen 29:21-28).

Jacob called Rachel his "wife" before he had consummated the marriage. Laban neglected to inform Jacob of the eldest-must-marry-first custom in his land, and probably avoided specifying an exact time as to when Rachel's seven years would begin, so he was technically not in violation of his agreement, though he certainly "deceived" Jacob. Later we find that Jacob did not treat Leah as well as Rachel, but there was probably little that Laban could do since Leah was married without an agreement. Laban, in his selfishness, probably deceived Jacob in order to keep him working for him—Jacob made money for Laban. In doing so, he made his family life for his daughters more difficult. Is there anything that Leah could have done to avoid being a "pawn" in her father's game? Yes. It would have taken much courage, but before Jacob went into her, she could have said, "I'm not Rachel, I'm Leah. You have no agreement to marry me." Her life, and the course of history, would have been very different. This example does not show that the marriage contract approach is wrong, but it shows what happens when it is not used.

What Role Should Priests or Ministers Play In a Marriage?

If a marriage should be made as a contract between the couple (or the parents of the couple), what is the role of the minister? We can search the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation along with a multitude of history books and

get only one answer: **None!**

When a "minister" claims heavenly authority for pronouncing people "husband and wife," he never quotes a scripture giving that authority—there is none. Occasionally, papers on the subject will cite Matthew 16:19:

And I will give you [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

This scripture says nothing about binding and loosing marriages. Also, the same people will sometimes use this same scripture to claim authority of one human leader (chief apostle) over the entire congregation. Were apostles the only ones who could "perform marriages?" If our Messiah wanted Apostles and other leaders to "bind and loose" marriages, would he have instructed them on how to deal with unconverted mates? Paul had never received such instruction (1Cor 7:10-15). When we realize that families had been taking care of their own marriage arrangements prior to the apostles, it is difficult to believe that the doctrine was completely changed without any direct discussion in the scriptures.

History simply shows that the practice of Christian priests or rabbi's "binding" a marriage is less than 700 years old. You can check any of the reference works listed in the box accompanying this article or search a library for yourself. We could find no serious disagreement. Marriages were simply handled by the families of the people involved. They were large celebrations (our Saviour attended one—John 2:1-2) where the guests were considered important witnesses to the event. If the husband or wife later did not keep their agreement or pretended like it never existed, all of the guests would be witnesses to the marriage.

Gradually, over the years, the clergy became more and more involved in weddings. It probably began by clerics coming to weddings as guests, and then blessing the couples. Also, if people did not have sufficient room for the guests at home, they would sometimes use the "church yard." During the middle ages when illiteracy was common, many marriage agreements were spoken rather than written. Our spoken marriage vows

of today are a successor of this practice.

But as we might expect, humans were not always good at living up to their marriage duties. Husbands and wives would forget their contract, and marriages and children would suffer. The clergy, being literate, would sometimes offer their services to write down these agreements and to hold onto them. At other times, they would simply serve as “God’s witness” of the agreement. Another practice: the celebration would take place at the groom’s home, but the crowd would go to the church for a service during the festivities. Many of these early involvements were genuine and good—there is nothing wrong with blessing a couple or encouraging them to keep the promises that they made.

Although these partial church involvements may be found at various times during the last 2000 years, there are very, very few records of a priest or rabbi pronouncing a couple “husband and wife” before 1300 AD. The practice of Catholic priests presiding over weddings was not official doctrine until the *Statement of the Sacrament of Matrimony from the 24th session of the Council of Trent, November 11, 1563*. The Protestant reformation was beginning at that time, so there was great pressure on the Catholics to prove to their members why they needed the Catholic church for day-to-day life. The *Statement of the Sacrament of Matrimony* contains an opening dissertation with some scriptural support, which is followed by 12 canons (sub-points) containing no scriptural support at all—just a promise of excommunication (being “anathema”) to anyone who disagrees:

CANON 1: If any one saith, that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelic law, (a sacrament) instituted by Christ the Lord; but that it has been invented by men in the Church; and that it does not confer grace; let him be anathema.

CANON 4: If any one saith, that the Church could not establish impediments dissolving marriage; or that she has erred in establishing them; let him be anathema.

CANON 10: If any one saith, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not better and

more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema.

CANON 11: If any one saith, that the prohibition of the solemnization of marriages at certain times of the year, is a tyrannical superstition, derived from the superstition of the heathen; or, condemn the benedictions and other ceremonies which the Church makes use of therein; let him be anathema.

CANON 12: If any one saith, that matrimonial causes do not belong to ecclesiastical judges; let him be anathema.

By making marriage a “sacrament” (like infant baptism, confirmation, communion, etc.), the Catholic Church placed themselves firmly in control. We must remember that civil governments often upheld the rulings of the Catholic church by physical force. Canon 11 clearly shows that the Catholics were attempting to control **when** marriages could be held—their Protestant critics which said such prohibitions were “superstitions of the heathen” were right!

After the decree of the *Council of Trent*, priest-conducted marriages became the order of the day. While some Protestant groups retained the custom of family-performed marriages for a while, the larger groups became hierarchical and began “offering the same services as” (controlling people in the same manner as) the Catholic Church. Not to be left out, Jewish rabbis and even people of other religions began having their religious leaders perform weddings.

As the years went by, the practice of clergy performing weddings became more and more common. Some states in the USA and some other countries still recognize marriages made by contract of the parties without any intervention by the clergy or the state. Many of the founders of the USA were independent Bible students and they saw that there was no authority for church or state to perform weddings. Today, however, most people believe that the clergy’s or government’s permission is required to have a marriage. Belief by many does not make truth.

Most people realize that they can be married by a judge if they do not want a clergy member to marry them. They may not realize that clergy members are

acting as agents of the state (as well as their “church”) when they perform weddings. Marriages are recorded legal events and judges and clergy members who perform weddings are normally responsible to properly notify the state. The state or legal aspects of marriage include the ownership of property, the custody of children, inheritance, etc. Obviously, these important aspects of life cannot be ignored.

How Should We Marry Today?

Are we saying that it is a sin to have a minister perform a wedding? No! Are we saying that anyone who does not have a signed contract today is not really married? No! While a written document is preferable, a verbal commitment is certainly sufficient. In most ceremonies, people recite a vow or at least say “I do” after the minister reads it. **The intent for a marriage and the consummation thereof makes a marriage.** You are still responsible before God, even though you did not start off with the best of circumstances.

Unfortunately, the present system is not serving us well. Many people do not study or even know the content of their vows before they marry, and soon forget them afterward. They have, and are too busy thinking of something else. When a “church couple” realizes they want to marry, the typical sequence of events they go through is like this:

The Way It Usually Is:

1. Find a minister with which to counsel with that will agree to marry the couple. Sometimes this council is good, sometimes it is bad. If he agrees to marry them, the couple often assumes that the Eternal is approving of their marriage.

2. Get engaged. The main event here is usually the exchange of expensive rings and an expensive dinner out. Afterward, great attention is given to planning the wedding: expensive and usually rented clothes, flowers, tablecloths, decorations, etc.

3. Get married. Lots of friends and family come. The presents they bring, especially when of a practical nature, are very helpful. Unfortunately, too much money is often spent to “impress” the guests—money that the couple could better use to start their life together. The couple exchanges spoken

vows and rings. The girl's father "gives his daughter away," and some relatives may stand with the bride or groom but the entire event is presided over by the minister—the family has little or nothing to say. The minister pronounces the couple man and wife—sometimes by the authority of the state, sometimes by the authority of God. People often believe that it is the state license that makes them married—and later may seek a state's permission for a divorce if things go wrong.

The Way it Should Be:

1. Counsel with family and friends. Much ministerial marriage counseling is merely a private sermon with little listening. Couples planning to marry need to hear from married people who know them and know where they need to change to have a successful marriage.

2. Write an agreement. The purpose of this agreement is to focus on the man's and wife's responsibilities for the marriage. What is he going to do? What is she going to do? Where are they going to live? The agreement may specify how they are to treat each other; who will have what responsibilities; which possessions they are to have before they marry (a car?); what kind of job the man and possibly the woman will have, etc. The focus should be first on planning the married life. Secondly, plans should be made for a large wedding where as many family and friends can be present to support them. Engagement rings, if you want them, are a minor issue.

3. The wedding celebration. While these historically lasted seven days, one day is probably all that most

people can manage now. This is a time for the families to assure their support of the marriage, a time to bring gifts, and a time for the couple to consummate the marriage in comfortable surroundings. The parents and friends should be involved in the ceremony—telling stories of their own weddings, relating important events in the couple's lives, and blessing them for the future. The activities should bring everyone together—it is not a time of nervousness and fright. The couple themselves should read their contract, or a brief statement of their own summarizing their devotion to each other. If they are ashamed to do this, they are probably in for a rough time together.

The legal aspects of the marriage can be taken care of at this ceremony (a common law marriage agreement can be signed or a marriage license can be signed by the couple and a minister or judge). On the other hand, it might be better to do these legal formalities at another time—thereby recognizing that it is the couple's commitment and becoming "one flesh" that makes the marriage, not the paper-work they file. Certainly, a minister should not claim to "pronounce them man and wife" by the authority of a church or God—he does not have that authority. The scripture instructs:

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Gen 2;24).

More to Come

This article is the first in a series regarding the subject of marriage and divorce. The intent of this series is not to propose a standard marriage proce-

cedure or ceremony, but to encourage couples and their families to take charge and do what is Biblically best for the marriage. We realize, though that we do not live in an ideal world. Problems like these exist:

"Some of my relatives might disown me if I didn't have a 'normal' wedding ceremony."

"We live far away from our families and they cannot all afford to attend the wedding."

"My parents refuse to have anything to do with the person I want to marry."

"My marriage is a nightmare, should I separate or get a legal divorce?"

"I am divorced, can I remarry?"

We realize that there are no simple answers to some of these questions. People have typically relied on ministerial counsel in these matters. Some counsel has been good, some not. It is the people who must live with the decisions that are made. If ministers do not have authority to bind marriages, they do not have authority to loose them either. People make friends, take jobs, hire others, enter into business contracts, conceive and raise children, counsel others, attend congregations, and make a multitude of other important activities without "ministerial" approval. Those schooled in the scriptures should be there to help when asked, but **people can and should learn to handle this part of their lives** in accordance with the scriptures.

We do not claim to have all of the answers, but we will cover the relevant scriptures and, we pray, provide a lot of help in the rest of this series.

—Norman S. Edwards

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Focus on the Family:

What Can We Learn from Their Work?

Past issues of *Servants' News* have contained many articles about the governing of "church organizations"—primarily Sabbath-keeping groups. We believe that there is something to be learned by looking at the accomplishments and plans of other organizations that seem to be filling a need among the Eternal's people, even though they are doctrinally far away.

My wife and I personally know of dozens of Sabbath-keepers who have received help for their families from *Focus on the Family*, an organization founded and led by Dr. James Dobson. We know of "Church of God" ministers, even "top evangelists" that use and recommend his literature. We have found it helpful in our own family. As far as we know, no "Church of God" group has comparable materials. Dr. Dobson and his associates are good at explaining Biblical principles of marriage and family in a way that our modern generation can understand and apply.

Yet, they believe in a Trinitarian God, the observing of Christmas and Easter, and other doctrines which would clearly classify them as "evangelical Protestant." They believe that salvation is possible without knowing the biblical law. Yet, most of what they teach is essentially the application of biblical law! Is the Eternal using them for His purpose, or is all of the help that people have received from them a "fortunate accident?"

Before reaching a conclusion on the matter, let us look at a brief history of *Focus on the Family* as related by James Dobson in a subscriber letter of April 1996:

Focus on the Family was born in the spring of 1977, shortly after I had resigned from the faculty of the University of Southern California, School of Medicine. I left the security of academia to write books, to do some broadcasting, to hold a few seminars, and to address what I believed to be the approaching disintegration of the family. The initial signs of decay were evident everywhere.

Thus, I opened a little two-room office in

Arcadia, California, hired a half-time secretary (Mrs Dee Otte) and with the help of a \$35,000 grant from Tyndale House Publishers, began a radio program heard once a week on 43 stations. It was a humble beginning, to be sure. I rented a typewriter for Dee and brought in a kitchen table to use as a desk. I dressed in sweaters, sneakers and khakis in those days (we had few visitors) and often rode to work on a bicycle. But at night, my wife and I were on our knees, asking the Lord to bless our meager efforts on behalf of hurting and wounded people.

Perhaps our faith was too small, because we were totally unprepared for what was about to happen. Within a few months, we were reeling backwards under a barrage of mail, telephone calls, speaking invitations and requests for counseling. Though we had underestimated the response, it was apparent that our underlying assessment had been correct—that the family was starting to come apart and needed all the help it could get. But how could one man deal with the needs that were brought to his door? In a word, he couldn't.

I began hiring and training staff to help me handle the mail and calls that streamed into our office. But while many people asked for assistance in those days, few remembered to contribute to the ministry. We soon ran out of money, which presented me with a theological dilemma. From the beginning, I had promised the Lord that I would never beg for funds or behave in ways that were disrespectful to His Kingdom. I figured if I worked hard and accepted no salary, the finances would take care of themselves. By the fall of 1979, however, our "payables" totaled about \$30,000 more than our assets, and a decision had to be made.

One day in mid-October, my mother was visiting our home and we were talking to her about what we should do. Then the doorbell rang. Standing on the front porch was my old college friend Jim Davis, who is a valuable member of the Focus staff today. He had driven down from his home in Oregon to attend business meetings. But as he passed through our suburb, he felt led to stop by for a visit.

"Jim," I said, "Come in. You're just the person I want to see. We have a difficult problem to deal with, and I want you to pray

with us about it."

With that, Shirley, Jim Davis, my mother and I went into our bedroom and got on our knees. I remember my prayer as though it were yesterday.

I said "Lord, I thought You led me to start this organization called *Focus on the Family*. It seemed clear that You wanted us to teach scriptural principles that people seem so hungry to hear. But now we have a financial need, and I wonder if I misunderstood Your choice. As You know, I don't believe it's right to spend money we don't have. If we're doing what You want us to do, this would be a good time to hear from You. But if the funds don't come in, I'm going to assume I made a mistake, and we'll close our doors."

The other members of our little group also prayed and asked the Lord to make possible the continuation of Focus on the Family.

And guess what? He was listening! Two incredible things happened in the next 30 days. First, more than \$60,000 was contributed to Focus in the month of November. More significantly, Word Publishers released a series of films shot during a seminar I had conducted the previous year in San Antonio, Texas. Predictably, it was called "Focus on the Family" and was eventually seen by 70 million people around the world. The series is still being shown today in Japan (you should see me speaking Japanese) and throughout Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union. That international exposure sent this ministry into orbit, and we haven't been back down to earth since.

Why do you suppose the unique blessing of the Lord has been on this work and on those who are called to serve in it? It's a good question. Who can know the mind of God? There are certainly more worthy and dedicated Christian leaders who struggle to keep body and soul together. I can only conclude that the prominence of Focus on the Family has very little to do with Shirley, me or our staff. Instead, we've come to believe that there are two explanations for what has happened in these two decades.

The first is related to the prayer life of my father, who seemed to live in the presence of the Lord. While praying early one morning in 1977, he was given the assurance that his

Continued on page 10

own ministry would reach millions of people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, although he would not live to see it. The Lord told him it would be accomplished through me. My dad suffered a massive heart attack the next day from which he never recovered. What a humbling legacy that has been handed down from the soul of this great man.

The second explanation for God's blessing is speculative, but it makes sense to me. The Lord has apparently chosen to place this ministry in the path of a cultural revolution that has shaken the very foundations of the family. It is not coincidental that we are positioned at the epicenter of this historic upheaval. Not only are we called to support the institution of marriage and parenthood, we are also asked to confront the evils of our day, including the campaigns to abort millions of babies, promote teen sexual promiscuity, legalize homosexual "marriages", interfere with parental rights, kill the sick and the elderly, outlaw religious expression in public life, and others. Literally, the gates of hell are arrayed against the church and the family today. Perhaps—and only God knows for sure—that is why He has commissioned us at this point in history.

Well, that is a quick and incomplete review of Focus on the Family's origins and how the ministry got to this moment. It's encouraging to look back for a moment or two, but we can't live in the past. There is more work to be done, and our primary energies must be directed toward the future. The issue before us now is, where do we go from here? That is a question that has occupied the attention of both our board of directors and our administrative staff in recent months. The result is not just an emphasis on the family, but primarily on the preeminence of evangelism. That is the heart and soul of this ministry. Let me share with you what we have concluded:

Our Vision:

How can Christians evangelize a society as complex and spiritually confused as North America in the 1990s? How do we break through to people here and around the world who no longer fear hell, are unconcerned about what God thinks, and even reject the existence of absolute truth or objective standards of "right" and "wrong"?

Servants' News: We find that Dr. Dobson's organization began like other worthwhile religious organizations: He perceived a need that was not being answered and he stepped out, in faith, and tried to serve that need. He did not

set out to gather a following or to be just another evangelical group "bringing people to Christ," but to teach the difference between "right" and "wrong" in matters relating to families.

Similarly, Herbert Armstrong departed from the Church of God Seventh Day so he could teach truth not accepted by that organization. His early ministry had many miracles and new converts. Later, he got involved in producing Quest magazine (which contained occult stories), a public concert series (which included Christmas programs) and other things far away from his original mission. He declared his organization to be the "one true church," even though he and his staff made no apparent effort to determine if the Eternal was working through other groups around the world.

We at *Servants' News* are concerned that Dr. Dobson's new recognition of the "preeminence of evangelism" will cause him to lose his "Focus on the Family." It sounds like an improvement, but if it stops him from doing what he has done so well already, it may not be. We continue with Dr. Dobson's letter (having left out a few paragraphs):

In scheduling our radio broadcasts, for example, we select highly practical topics that will interest people with no particular Christian commitment. Tucked within these discussions are elements of what we believe, although the presentation is subtle and inoffensive. Then, about every three weeks we typically schedule what is called a "harvest program," which focuses on a testimony or dramatic story of personal conversion. Repeatedly, we hear from people who became interested in the broadcast almost accidentally while spinning the radio dial, and then were introduced to Jesus Christ during one of these harvest programs. Nothing is more gratifying than to hear these accounts of personal conversion.

Servants' News: Obviously, real conversion is a good thing. But, it is a complete change of life—the biggest decision people will ever make. In the book of Acts, we find cases where people were converted after hearing one sermon. But, these were Jews and converts who had studied the scriptures all of their

lives. They knew what the Eternal was like and how he expected them to get along with their neighbor. Today, the general public is largely ignorant of the Bible and has a completely false concept of what Jesus and Christianity is about. They may have no knowledge of real repentance, baptism, and the power of the holy spirit. Telling people that they are eternally "saved" because they "accepted Jesus" after hearing only a few radio programs is very misleading. While it is a mistake for men to judge whom the Eternal will give His spirit (Acts 10:44-45), **the fruits of the lives of many who claim to be "saved" show that they**

The issue is not necessarily conversion. Balaam and Balaam's ass did the will of the Eternal, but they were not converted.

have not received His spirit. They may be very excited and tell glowing stories of a quick conversion

experience, but only weeks or months later it is "all over" and they **become more convinced than ever before that the Bible does not have the answer for their lives.** Furthermore, we must realize that we cannot "call" people with a good marketing program, but only the Father in heaven can (John 6:44,65).

It would seem that Dr. Dobson's former approach of teaching the Bible principles that produce peace in families would be far more beneficial. A person who is willing to live by these principles will be blessed for doing so whether they are called or not. After people with little Bible knowledge see how well it works over the years, they may then be ready for a life-time of commitment to the Great Writer of those laws and principles; and He may be ready to "call" them. They will have a basic understanding of the vast difference between the way that they have been living and the way that He expects them to live through the power of his spirit. Dr. Dobson continues:

To be candid, we have not always understood the unique opportunity available to us in this context. When *Focus on the Family* was organized back in 1977, it was our intent to teach and reinforce the fundamentals of child discipline, adolescent development, marital harmony and other principles of family living from a biblical perspective. Our message was designed mostly for believers who needed help applying

traditional Christian understandings to their own circumstances. But in the overwhelming response to those early broadcasts, we saw the evangelistic implications of our message. While we were growing from a staff of two employees to more than 300 by 1982, and then, to 1,200 today, it has become apparent that the Lord was calling us to a higher purpose. We recognized the insufficiency of building stronger families if its members didn't know the Creator of families. Today, our *raison d'être* is crystal clear. Everything we do, which encompasses 68 ministries around the world, is a function of the following mission statement adopted by our board of directors:

To cooperate with the Holy Spirit in disseminating the Gospel of Jesus Christ to as many people as possible, and specifically, to accomplish that objective by helping to preserve traditional values and the institution of the family.

Servants' News: This mission statement definitely sets evangelism as the number one priority and relegates his past success as only a means to accomplish that end. We hope this new primary goal will not render ineffective his excellent service of so many years. Also, we are a little dismayed by the wording "cooperate with the Holy Spirit" rather than "be led by it." "Cooperate" implies a relationship of near equals, not of submission to the power of the infinitely-wise Eternal. "Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it (Pslm 127:1). While this may be a "picky point" of wording, mission statements are usually composed by many people and each word is carefully chosen to say exactly what the group intends. Unfortunately, this attitude of human strength instead of Heavenly strength continues in the Mr. Dobson's letter—we have underlined a few places to bring this out:

Focus on the Family is uniquely positioned to capitalize on the changing social environment around the world. We are still a young, entrepreneurial organization. Ideas pop up rapidly and get talked about, refined and put into play with enthusiasm. The ministry prides itself in being lean and flexible, ready instantaneously to accept a new challenge or opportunity.

We spend very little time or money on

fund raising. During the past fiscal year, fully 86 percent of our income was used to support our various ministries (87 percent in Canada), compared to only 4 percent for fund raising (8 percent in Canada) and 10 percent for general and administrative expenses (5 percent in Canada). Our energies are invested not only in radio and television, but also in print, motion pictures and videos, one to one contact with families via letters and phone calls, on-line and CD-ROM. Our daily 30-minute radio program is the second most widely syndicated show in America (after Paul Harvey). We also produce other radio programs that hold the third, fourth, fifth, seventh and eighth spots in the syndication standings. *Focus on the Family* is the second most widely read religious magazine in America (after *Guideposts*). Our videos are shown in more public schools than in churches. In the United States, we get enough mail every day to have been granted our own zip code.

We specialize in both the micro (helping a single mom in Ohio find the courage to face another week) and the macro (advising Congress about its family policies). We stand for absolute truth in a relativistic age. We believe:

- In the value of bearing and raising children
- In the permanence of marital relationships
- In the intrinsic worth of every human being on earth, including the unborn

It is not our place to judge how the Eternal will personally deal with each person. We need to judge the teaching. We can accept teaching and preaching from anywhere if it helps us and is in accordance with the scriptures.

child

- In asking government and the church to make family life better, not worse

Focus continues its period of sustained growth. Nevertheless, the 2 million constituents on our mailing list represent only 2 percent of the 98 million households in America, and a tiny fraction of the world population. Obviously, there is so much left to be done.

Given that anticipated need into the foreseeable future, recent meetings have been held to answer two vital questions:

- What new programs can we initiate now?
- What would we do if significant additional resources were available?

The following items represent primarily our answers to the second question above,

and we are asking the Lord for the where-withal to expand this outreach exponentially.

Ways To Reach More People For The Lord

In order to penetrate up to 1 billion new households around the globe: Establish a radio presence in the more than 250 nations of the world.

Servants' News: Dr. Dobson's letter went on to establish many large goals of reaching the millions in America and the billions in the world at large. While not a one of these goals is a "sin," if *Focus on the Family* came to the point where they believed all of these goals were their "commission," they would, in essence, be the "one Church on Earth." This is particularly disturbing when we realize that *Focus on the Family* has endorsed the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together; The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* (see *Servants' News*, August 1996). This long, cleverly worded document co-authored by prominent evangelical Chuck Colson was a plan to bring Catholics and evangelicals together—keeping Catholic theology and authority largely intact. Also, according to *Foundation Magazine* (May-June 1996, pp 6-12):

Dobson and Colson also have big

plans for cleaning up the Church. Dobson reports that at a 5/23/96 *Focus on the Family* board

meeting, the Board said that "the Lord appears to have ordained two people at this time to speak to the issue of righteousness—Chuck Colson and myself"—and urged Dobson to work with Colson concerning the possibility of doing stadium rallies in 1997; Dobson said Colson was very excited about that. Dobson also said that the Focus Board has decided that the church needs cleaning up, and that he (Dobson) and *Focus on the Family* intend to take charge and make it happen, with "Chuck Colson's help."

Only the Eternal knows whether Dobson's motivations are really to help everyone or to gain power for himself. Because of his lack of understanding

about the Sabbath and so many other fundamental doctrines, I am convinced that he has not been called to “clean up the church.”

Nevertheless, this “I’m **the one** doing the work” mentality has affected servants of the Eternal from Moses (Num 20:10-12) to Elijah (1Kngs 19:10,18) to the present day. One notable exception was John the Baptist who realized his limitations (John 3:28-30)—this may be why the Messiah referred to him as the greatest man (Mat 11:11). We should not be surprised if other individuals and organizations today think that they are the main or only one “doing the work.” On the other hand, **we should not think they are no longer being used by the Eternal just because they make this mistake!** The Eternal did not give up on Moses or Elijah because of their mistakes. We must remember that all humans are humans and Satan would like to deceive them all. Just because a person begins to go a certain direction, does not mean that he will not change later.

From an administrative perspective, reaching the world with the Gospel is **not simply a matter of translating literature for Americans into other languages.** *Focus on the Family* has some excellent literature on the heart-rending problems of what to do when you discover your spouse is having an affair. In some Eastern countries, that is an extremely rare problem—when it happens, the person simply proves the case to the authorities and the unfaithful spouse is executed. Compared to the United States of America, some countries have only a tiny fraction of the divorce, addiction, juvenile delinquency, homosexuality and other such problems. Do people in these countries still have need to learn from the Bible? Yes they do! They need to learn a lot about love, compassion, kindness and living at peace. But are they likely to respond to messages written about American problems? Probably not! They need literature and preaching from a person who **understands the Bible as well as their problems and their culture.**

We are not saying that *Focus on the Family* is ignorant of the difficulties of international evangelism. Their staff already contains people who are very knowledgeable of some countries and cultures. **We are saying that the task of evangelizing the world is extremely**

complex and no one man can understand it all, let alone know the will of the Eternal on this matter

The next-to-last paragraph of the letter indicates that Mr Dobson realizes that their work must be based on the one True Foundation (1Cor 3:11), but continues to support the idea that they are planning their own agenda:

Do these objectives seem far-fetched and hopelessly out of reach? Perhaps. But who could have anticipated what God would do with a fledgling little one-man-band back in the spring of 1977? Actually, the possibilities I've listed are simply extensions of the programs under way in the 70 countries where we're actually broadcasting. Let me make it clear that we only want to pursue new ventures if we are led to do so. It has never been our purpose to grow as a ministry—but it is our passion to bring millions of people to Jesus Christ and to support the institution of the family in the nations of the world. And when it comes to that task, it's evident that “we've only just begun.”

Servants' News: We hope that everyone at *Focus on the Family* will continue to serve the Eternal in the way that He chooses for them. They still have a great variety of books, magazines, tapes, and videos that help people deal with a variety of family situations—they use the truth of the Bible to teach lasting solutions. The issue is not necessarily conversion. Jehu (2Kng 10:28-31), Balaam and Balaam's ass did the will of the Eternal, but they were not converted. Our New Testament was copied and canonized by Trinitarians. Our Old Testament was maintained by some who did not believe Yeshua (Jesus) was the Messiah. I am **certain** that there are some people working for *Focus on the Family* who do not have the holy spirit. I am also certain that there are some people working at the headquarters of Sabbath keeping congregations who do not have the holy spirit. It is not our place to judge how the Eternal will personally deal with each person. We need to judge the teaching. We can accept teaching and the preaching from anywhere if it helps us and is in accordance with the scriptures.

The scriptures are full of examples of the Eternal using different people for different things; the scriptures on spiritual gifts (1Cor 12) confirm without doubt

that not everyone has every gift (v29-30). Rather than looking for “the one right group” or one man to be our “spiritual leader,” we need to find groups and individuals with specific gifts that can help us do what we need to do. (Also, we need to find out what our own gifts are and how we can serve others.)

Summary

We believe we can draw the following conclusions from our brief look at *Focus on the Family*:

1) *Focus on the Family* has helped a lot of people—including Sabbath-keeping “Church of God” members—to have better family relationships.

2) Organizations (and individuals) usually have both good and bad aspects. We can learn some biblical truth from an organization even though they have some doctrines that we now understand to be wrong. We can probably all remember a time when we held a wrong doctrine. We must always compare teaching to the scriptures. If we find ourselves absorbing the “bad” from an organization, we should depart from it immediately.

3) An organization that is helpful today may not be helpful tomorrow. It is easy for a good organization or leader to stray from their mission. If *Focus on the Family*, in the future, drops much of their sound teaching on families in order to concentrate on global evangelism, they may become much less helpful.

4) It is ultimately the Spirit that will guide us into all truth, not a specific teacher or organization (John 16:13). We can learn from a great many groups, but we must always guard our minds and “try the spirits.”

Focus on the Family—what can we learn from their work? We can learn both from what they teach and from their example. We can learn a lot about families, we can learn to diligently pursue the work that the Eternal has given us to do, and we can learn not to stray from that work.

You may subscribe to the free *Focus on the Family* magazine and obtain more information by contacting *Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO 80995, 800-232-6459.*

Also, many of the best items from *Focus on the Family* are available on loan from *Friends of the Family Library, 3127 Old Lorena Rd, Lorena,*

“What God Has Joined Together . . .

The four examples below are true stories but the names have been changed to protect the identity of those involved.

Example 1: Jane and her husband decided to divorce after months of arguing and fighting over their church's changes in major doctrines and beliefs.

Example 2: Sally and her husband divorced after joining a smaller church organization and being judged “spiritually incompatible” by “church authority.” She believes “the church” has authority to rule in all areas of her life. He doesn't.

Example 3: Because of doctrinal differences, Bob left the big church group that he and Jill had attended since they married. In Jill's mind, he became an unbeliever so she divorced him and remarried. A couple of years later, Jill left the same church group over similar doctrinal differences.

Example 4: Dan had a difficult marriage for many years, but the ministers in his church organization continued to tell him to work out his problems. Later, he joined a new organization where the ministers listened only to his side of the story and encouraged him to divorce and remarry. His second marriage had similar problems.

The instability in church organizations typically affects families in many ways. Even marriages that are strong and stable will be affected, but those that are less stable could be destroyed. Children are devastated and depressed over their broken home. Emotional problems result with physical problems following.

This article is not addressing those in abusive relationships, who may have a real reason for a separation or divorce. It is addressing couples who have had at least some cooperation and family success and believe in marriage commitment. After recent religious troubles and related marital troubles, some are confused over the issue of church authority and loyalty versus family loyalty. We hope to deal with these issues.

How to Weather The Storm

1. Pray and seek our Father's guidance in your marriage. Also, ask others to pray for you. Study good books

on marriage and apply laws to a happy marriage. **If you both believe the Eternal brought you together, it is inconsistent to believe He is now breaking up your marriage.** Consider who is breaking up your marriage. Maybe you have a false concept of “church unity” if achieving it requires the destruction of your divinely given family.

2. Counsel with people who will encourage you to work together to save your marriage. In saving your marriage, you will save yourself, your children, your relatives and in-laws much heartache and distress. There are many organizations that produce educational resources for achieving family harmony. A local public library and local Christian bookstore may be helpful. Also, you may send for Friends of the Family Library to borrow good books, cassette tapes, and videos (many from Focus on the Family, see accompanying article) on marriage and family: 3127 Old Lorena Road, Lorena, Texas 76655. Also, try Family Life Today in Little Rock, Arkansas: 800 FL TODAY.

3. (For Examples #1 and #3) Try attending different congregations together if that makes a more peaceful home. Flexibility and “give and take” is what marriage is all about. You have probably already heard some doctrinal error in a previous congregation that you have attended—you can probably deal with hearing some more temporarily until your marriage is stable again. This purpose is to save your family, your marriage and your life as you know it. One week, attend the wife's church preference and the next week, attend the husband's church preference. I know personally of couples who practice this and it works for them. If this does not work for you, try doing what a minister's wife tried doing: she did not agree with many doctrinal changes occurring in her church yet her husband did not discern it as quickly as she did. She went to church with him but took a book and read it during services in order to “keep her sanity.” This gave her husband “time” to work through the difficulty and sustained marital harmony. They have now moved on together to another fellowship. If there is still contention over basic beliefs, then,

for the sake of the marriage, you can agree to disagree, and accept each other's differences.

Some “ministers” quote Matthew 10:37, but wrongly apply it to their particular church group, instead of to Christ. In this way, they justify splitting up marriages.

4. (For Example #2) Seriously question and study the statement of a

Let Not Man Separate”

“minister” who claims that you and your spouse are “spiritually incompatible”. What does this mean? How can a couple live happily for years, have several children blessing the marriage and be physically compatible, but be “spiritually incompatible”? Or does that mean that the “ministers” use that term when they attempt to keep members for their own social, financial, and security reasons? Disagreeing on spiritual issues is O.K.; we have free moral agency. Supporting the right family (yours), is more important than supporting the right church group.

5. (For Examples #3 and #4) Realize that Jesus Christ (Yeshua) is our authority and wives and husbands are to please one another. Has the church ever been placed over a wife to rule in place of her husband? Some wives place “church authority” over their husbands. Is this biblical? **“But I want you to understand that Christ is the Head of every man and the husband is the head of his wife and God is the Head of Christ” (1Cor 11:3, NRSV).**

On the other hand, if some husbands were not so overbearing, then the wife would not have to resort to outside authority to receive fair treatment in her life. Some husbands think they are authorized by the Bible to relate to their wife as a dictator would. The scriptures about submitting one to another are ignored (Eph 5:21, 1Pet 5:5). Obviously, the relationship should be one of endeared companionship and equal respect, not of one controlling another. Couples who think religious differences are separating them, might consider if religion is just an excuse—there may be other unsolved problems that are the real cause of marital difficulty.

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"12 Tribes" from page 1

Partriarch's than these countries.

But just this supposition alone would not prove that these nations are the descendents of ancient Israel. There are numerous scriptures giving specific details of the descendants of Israel, particularly Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Also, it would be helpful if we could find historical evidence. Is there any?

The evidence is overwhelming!

Some people think that recognizing the USA, the British Empire and other nations as modern day Israel is a peculiar doctrine held only by obscure British-Israelists and Herbert Armstrong. Today there are numerous Sunday-keeping groups and even non-Christian groups that hold this belief. Many of them did not gain their understanding from Armstrong, but discovered much on their own. Unfortunately, there are groups that have accepted this understanding and gone on to add their own error to it—claiming that most modern-day Jews are not really Israelites but are (along with blacks and others) a sub-human species. But just because someone mixes error with truth, the truth-part does not become any less true.

We do not have the time or space for Servants' News to cover every aspect of this teaching in detail, but we can point the way to some good information. The *History Research Projects* Order Form in our literature list is the single best source of other sources that we know of. You will also find good information in *Sabbath History* magazine—a free sample copy also available on our back page.

We don't agree with everything, but the booklet *America and Britain in Prophecy* has an overwhelming amount of good information. (It is free from the Global Church of God, PO Box 501111, San Diego, California, 92150-1111, 800-959-1641.) An even more in-depth book can be purchased from non-aligned Sabbath-keeper, Steven Collins, 3901 Crescent Dr, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 57106, 605-361-5069.

One of the areas in which we feel some of the research has erred, is the determination of which country today is Ephraim and which is Manasseh. We have had nearly a dozen people mention this subject, so we include a few short articles in this issue.

—Norman S. Edwards

Will the Real Ephraim Please Stand Up?

by Harry Curley

There has been much speculation about the modern identity of the "lost ten tribes" of ancient Israel. When J. H. Allen wrote "Judah's Scepter and Joseph's Birthright", around the turn of the century, not all facts were in. He identified Great Britain as Ephraim because it seemed greater than the United States of America, which he identified as Manasseh. Herbert Armstrong's first book on the subject copied whole chapters of Allen's work and identified the countries the same way. Even up to World War II, Great Britain was a possible country to pick as "the greatest." After that war, the USA

took the lead. Genesis 48:19 states:

He shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.

Great Britain became great, but truly, the United States became greater. Some have felt that the multitude of nations pointed to the British Empire. It only lasted a short while compared to man's history and is over with now. The United States, as its name describes, is a multitude or "union" of nation states. It was formed out of many colonies that all would have

Coronation Stone Goes To Scotland.

The Associated Press, July 14, 1996

LONDON—The Stone of Scone, a symbol at the coronation of English and British kings for 700 years, is returning to Scotland.

Prime Minister John Major made the announcement Wednesday, stoking debate over whether Scotland should gain some form of independence.

Carried away by King Edward I in 1296, the 400-pound Stone of scone (pronounced skoon) reputedly was the coronation seat of ancient kings of Scotland and Ireland.

Opposition parties who advocate independence said the return of the stone was not enough.

"The majority of people in Scotland...want not just the symbol but the substance, the substance of the return of democratic control over our internal affairs in Scotland," said Sir David Steel of the Liberal Democratic Party.

When I visited England in 1983, the British Government Tour-Guide who was explaining the Stone of Scone to tourists said they believed it was Jacob's pillar stone (Gen 28:22) and that the ancient Israelite kings were crowned upon it.

Does the removing of this stone mean that England is soon to go into captivity? How does it relate to Ezekiel 21:26-27, which has been interpreted as being the movement of this stone. It is interesting that national patriotism is so low that England is willing to part with this national symbol in hope of achieving a temporary peace with Scotland. We do not have any revelation or special understanding of these events or related prophecies, but they are certainly something to watch and to pray about. —NSE

become their own nations, had they not joined together. California alone would be one of the top nations in the world, if it were a country by itself.

The nation with the larger population, the United States of America, must be Ephraim. "They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, And they are the thousands of Manasseh" (Deut 33:17).

Ephraim and Manasseh have a lot in common, but the Bible does point out some differences. Manasseh was split in two. The same is true today. England on one side of the globe. Australia and New Zealand on the other side. Manasseh got along better with Judah. That may explain why the throne of David is in England. What nation would you expect to say this:

What portion have we in David?
neither have we inheritance in the
son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel:
now see to thine own house, David.
So Israel departed unto their tents
(1Kng 12:16).

Sounds a lot like "Taxation without representation". A typical American response. We have biblical examples of how Ephraim conducted himself in war, and present day examples of modern nations. Which country, Great Britain or United States, would be more likely to respond this way?

We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life (1Kng 20:31).

And they quickly grasped at this word and said, "Your brother Ben-Hadad. So he said, Go, bring him. Then Ben-Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot (1Kng 20:33).

The USA is the only nation that treats its vanquished enemies as equals. That is not a British trait.

Also, once the British get involved in a war, they tend to finish it—the 1982 Falkland Islands war being a recent example. The United States of America sometimes gives up when it has the best weapons and could conquer its enemies (Korea, Viet Nam, Kuwait, etc.) Who does that in prophecy?

The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, Turned

back in the day of battle (Pslm 78:9).

There is a difference between how a firstborn acts and how someone who is not a firstborn. Firstborn's often think they are "hot stuff." What others think of them is important to them. England and France both act like firstborns. The United States of America is not troubled by that, as long as they are "making a buck" on whatever is happening.

The United States of America looks to England like an older brother. Even though there is a respect there, the USA still "does its own thing." England acts with amazement on how its younger brother could take the lead in the world. You can detect that it kind of hurts her.

A lot of evidence connects Great Britain with the Birthright. Many feel this is proof that they are Ephraim. The facts are correct, but the conclusion could be wrong. Who is most interested in keeping family genealogy? The first born or the others? It is the first born of course. In this case, that would be Manasseh. For the more you can find to link Great Britain with Joseph, the more you prove she is Manasseh and not Ephraim.


Mislabeling Ephraim prevents prophecy from being fully understood. Many think that England will go to Germany for money at the end time. Although it is not the "picture of prosperity", it is solvent. It is the USA that has set all world records for debt.

When Ephraim saw his sickness,
And Judah saw his wound. Then
Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to
King Jareb; Yet he cannot cure you,
Nor heal you of your wound (Hos
5:13).

Germany might be able to bail out England with pocket cash, but the United States is a different matter. America is going so deep into debt that even Germany can not help.

What makes a nation great? Take your pick, and the United States comes out ahead of Great Britain:

Population
Habitable Land Size
Raw Materials
Total Wealth
Military Power
High Technology

Even in conquests: Great Britain has Mt. Everest, but the United States has the Moon. 

Ephraim, Manasseh, Texas and the Bill of Rights

I have been an avid student of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong for almost thirty years. I stick to the vast majority of his work like glue. However, in the area of Ephraim and Manasseh and who they are in prophecy, I have always come up with questions (contradictions). Allow me to present those contradictions, and perhaps sort them out!

Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it upon **Ephraim's head, who was the younger**, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly **for Manasseh was the first born** (Gen 48:14).

Contradiction #1 Manasseh is supposed to be the U.S. in prophecy, but Manasseh was the older brother. **How can the younger brother be the older nation and the older brother be the younger**



nation? Why this anomaly? Why the contradiction? Obviously this was not a divine mistake!

And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great (referring to Manasseh): **but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he**, and his seed shall become a multitude (company) of nations (Gen 48:19).

Contradiction #2 If Manasseh was to be second rate, how come he became the greatest nation (the U.S.)? And if Ephraim was to

become the greatest nation, how come he became the second-rate British Commonwealth? It doesn't match! Why this glaring anomaly? Why the contradiction?

The commonly offered proof that Ephraim is the British Common Wealth is that "his seed shall become 'a multitude of nations'." I had read that description as well as: "the U.S. was only a single country." I accepted those "proofs" for twenty-some years, but these questions, these anomalies, these glaring contradictions still lingered.

Genesis 35:11 uses the expression "**company of nations.**" What is a "company," anyway? According to Strong's, the Hebrew word for "company" in this verse is *qahal*, "... to assemble (selves) (together)". It is not a division created "from the top, down."

Recently I had reason to study American history, especially the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. I learned that the original Thirteen Colonies rejected the "assembling together" into the Federal Union for more than four years because they did not like the idea of losing their freedom as separated and equal governments. Not until the Bill of Rights came along guaranteeing their separate and autonomous governments ("states" or "nations") did they accept the Federal Union. The Tenth Amendment (last of the Bill of Rights) is:

The powers not delegated to the

United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

In other words, the "United States" is not a hierarchical system controlling the 50 states. It is a creation of the constitution, given limited power by representatives of the 50 states, Why weren't we taught that in public school?

There is one other bit of conflicting data that has a bearing on this controversy. I am a Texan (you Texans out there will understand this instantly)! Texans are a unique people. Texans are also a very independent and proud group of people, no less independent and proud than the original thirteen colonies. Texas was legally a nation of its own for 10 years before it became a state. I am a Texan first, then a citizen of the United States. Texans feel they are loosely bound to the Federal Union (though the Federal Government sees it differently.)



Even today, many Texans believe we are not simply a state, but a nation.

Also please consider the Hebrew word for "nation" which is *gowy* which comes from a root word meaning "a massing", as of locusts. Each separate colony was a "massing" of like peo-

ples. Each colony was unique; they had different laws regarding religion, taxes, slavery, etc. Ask almost any Texan if Texas is unique—he will tell you.

Conclusion: Texas was a separate nation, one of "the company of nations" that Ephraim was to become. Ephraim, the USA, "assembled themselves



together" to become an **assembly of states** (a company of nations). This with a better understanding of the Bill of Rights, the most damaging argument to the contrary has now crumbled. So now we see that **Ephraim**, the younger brother **did** become the younger country. Yes, Manasseh was great, but Ephraim literally **did** become "greater than he"—the incredibly great and wealthy United States of America as prophesied.

Besides the value of this being a "new truth", the precise understanding of Ephraim in prophecy has an even greater importance. Look in your concordance: There are many more references to Ephraim than to Manasseh. To more fully understand the USA's role in this end time scenario, particular attention must be paid to each and every prophecy and historical event in the Bible concerning Ephraim.

—Lyle Timmins

"Joined" from page 13

Examples of "church authority" in the Bible seem to be regarding "church matters": preaching the gospel, planning services, scheduling activities, etc. If the Apostle Paul did not have a command "from the Lord" regarding believers with unbelieving mates (1Cor 7:12), how do "ministers" today claim to have authority to make such decisions for people?

There has been much grief for countless ones over the divorce and remarriage decisions made in past years in some churches. I personally know of a woman who became interested in biblical truth in the 60's. She and her husband had a long, happy marriage, that was blessed with children. Years earlier, her husband had been married and divorced. The "church" refused to let her come to their meetings

until she divorced her mate. She was devastated as she put great value on the happy family she was blessed with. She never went back to that fellowship. The members of that particular fellowship were instructed to stay away from her as "she prefers her family over the truth". This is an example of some of the distorted teachings many have experienced.

And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mat 19:4-6).

In our modern world, we may think it

is easier to live without a complete family, but is this what our Creator wants us to do? The emptiness people feel after a divorce is quickly erased by a second marriage, but what they had in the early years of the former marriage is forgotten. And the relationship lingers with the children, grandchildren, in-laws, numerous relatives and acquaintances made during the former marriage. Let us prove our marriage commitments by honoring and preserving relationships the Eternal gives us.

—Marleen Edwards

(Editor's Note: *By What Authority*, by John A. Difley addresses questions like who should be serving us, how should servants be chosen, what are their duties, are they divinely authorized, is ordination always of God? This 10-page article is available on request.)



Ephraim and Manasseh— —Which is Which?

This article is a quotation of page 47 from a very informative booklet on the identity of modern-day Israel: *America and Britain in Prophecy* by Raymond McNair © 1996. It is available free from the Global Church of God, PO Box 501111, San Diego, California, 92150-1111, 800-959-1641. We agree with much of the booklet, but found difficulty with this page. We reprint the entire one-page “box” with comments.

McNair: Remember from chapter one what God Almighty inspired the Patriarch Jacob to prophesy of the descendants of Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh: “He [Manasseh] also shall be A NATION—and he also shall be GREAT [i.e., a GREAT NATION or GREAT PEOPLE]—but nevertheless his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be GREATER than he, and his race shall be a MULTITUDE OF NATIONS (Gen. 48:19 Fenton). Millions have come to see the fulfillment of that divine promise in the emergence to nationhood of the United States (the GREAT NATION); and they have also come to believe that Britain and her British-descended Commonwealth nations constitute the MULTITUDE OF NATIONS—both of which Almighty God prophesied would rise to prominence “in the last days” (cf. Gen. 48:49; Deut. 33).

In recent years, however, some have concluded that the United States is modern Ephraim and that Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are Manasseh. This view is based, primarily, on three arguments: 1) America is the “multitude of nations” because it is composed of 50 states; 2) the U.S., at its height, was “greater” in wealth and power than Britain at its height; and 3) the U.S. is “younger” than Britain—just as Ephraim was younger than Manasseh. Do these points prove the case? Let’s look at them one at a time.

First, could the fifty states of the Union be considered 50 “nations”? Could the US now be, or ever have been, looked upon as a “multitude of nations” in any sense? Emphatically, no! America is “**ONE nation under God, indivisible**” (as stated in the US Pledge of Allegiance). The American Civil War was fought (1861-1865) to prevent the United States from being rent asunder into two nations—the Union and the

Confederacy. Our nation’s motto, *E Pluribus Unum*, means “**From many people, ONE [nation]!**” During the 1960’s, when various state governors tried to prevent racial desegregation, U.S. presidents sent federal law enforcement officers into certain states (Arkansas, Alabama and Mississippi) to prove that those states were *not* sovereign, or independent, but had to answer to a higher power—the U.S. Federal Government! Not one of the 50 states which presently make up the United States is a sovereign nation! The U.S. is definitely, as De Tocqueville called it, “A GREAT NATION”—i.e., Manasseh!!

SN: There are a number of points to consider here:

1. The word “state,” when used for the rest of the world means “nation” (e.g. “State of Israel”, head of State). Most other large, segmented countries have “provinces.” It has been over the last 100 years or so that the word “state” has come to mean “section of a country.”

2. Neither the Pledge of Allegiance nor De Tocqueville’s writing are the foundation of our government. The foundation is the constitution which specifies only limited powers given to the Federal Union. Quoting from the second paragraph of the 1947 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, article *The United States of America*: “The United States consists of 48 separate and theoretically sovereign states which are joined together by a federal government to which the original 13 states delegated certain powers as outlined in the federal constitution adopted in 1787 but put in force in 1789.” From 1781 to 1787 the states worked together through the more loosely governed Articles of Confederation. To this day, the President of the USA is elected by the states, not directly by the popular vote.

3. When the American Civil War started, all Northern and Southern states each debated in their own state legislatures

which side they would join (if any) and how many troops they would send, etc. The Southern states claimed that the Federal government had no jurisdiction over them in questions such as slavery—the legality of Lincoln’s “Emancipation Proclamation” was questioned in both North and South. The issue was not submitted to the Supreme Court, but solved by war. Even then, no significant Federal army existed until Lincoln issued executive order #1 which called up 75,000 militia troops to make one.

4. Our nation’s motto, *E Pluribus Unum*, simply means “from many, one.” It says nothing about “people” or “one nation.” It fits the description of a “company of nations” rather well. In fact, that was the initial intent of the constitution from the beginning.

McNair: By the same token, it would be wrong, to call Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand “A great nation.” They, in fact, form a *plurality* of independent, sovereign nations—each possessing its own parliament with complete authority over its own citizens, foreign policy, defense and finances. Canada, Australia and New Zealand each has a Governor General as a representative of the British Crown. However, this is a very loose tie, since these three countries look upon the British monarch as only a figurehead. Of course some will argue that the British *Empire*, which preceded the British Commonwealth, was the great single nation. Yet that too is false. Britain was the “Mother Country” which, through colonization, gave birth to several other British-peopled nations. Clearly, Britain is Ephraim!

SN: While the English Monarchy has practically given up much of its power to Parliament and the Prime Minister, the King or Queen is still the official head of the nation—and head of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, etc. When this editor visited those countries during the early 80’s, common people still referred to Queen Elizabeth as “their queen.” During much of the height of its power, the British Empire was largely ruled by a single monarch.

McNair: Second, was the American zenith of greatness really higher than Britain’s? Absolutely not! The British directly ruled a quarter of the earth’s land and nearly a third of its population. Even today, Canada alone is territorially larger than the entire United States,

and Australia is almost as big as the territory of America's 48 contiguous states. Britain directly possessed the wealth of all these regions too. It only *seems* that America has possessed a greater percentage of wealth than Britain did. Why? Because advances in technology have enabled so much greater things to be accomplished with money than could ever have been done before. For example, a million dollars in today's money will buy only a tiny fraction of what a million dollars would have bought in the 1800's—yet today it could buy much *better* things that did not even exist then!

SN: Total land area does not seem to be the most important measure of national greatness. Large sections of Canada and Australia (and the Western USA) are not very productive. If we measure farmable or productive land, the USA is very close or ahead—depending on how we define “productive.”

When it comes to total wealth, the USA was certainly behind the British Empire in the 1700's and much of the 1800's. But even if we adjust for inflation, the British Commonwealth is still wealthier this century than she was in the 1800's. The USA Gross National Product (GNP) this century has almost always been over twice as much as the combined British Commonwealth. Also, it does not seem a fair comparison to dismiss the USA's technology-related wealth: the USA is largely responsible for creating the technology that made it wealthy.

McNair: What about military dominance? It is true that, since America was the only nation in possession of the atomic bomb after World War II, the ratio of power between the U.S. and the rest of the world was greater at that time than any other nation has ever enjoyed. (In fact, none have even come close.) However, this only lasted about four short years—during which time the U.S. was in an extremely tight alliance with Great Britain. The tremendous military supremacy *Britain* enjoyed during *its* heyday lasted far longer than America's. And Britain has possessed far more of the vital “sea gates” than America. Here, again, it is obvious that Britain is Ephraim and the U.S.A. is Manasseh.

SN: Britain twice failed to defeat the USA in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. The USA's entry into World Wars I and

II was unquestionably the deciding factor. While Britain did rule the seas for many years, few major nations feared world conquest by the British. Whereas, since World War II, the Soviet Union has been so afraid of American attack that they economically ruined their country in a race to build arms. The Persian Gulf war proved the superiority of American high-tech weapons over soviet weapons.

McNair: Third, just because the United States of America is a younger state than the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, does that mean that the U.S. must be Ephraim, Joseph's younger son, and that the U.K. must be Manasseh? Definitely not! These two brother peoples lived together in Britain for centuries. Thus, both *peoples* are basically the same age! However, from a national perspective, consider that, with the separation of the two brothers through the War of Independence (1775-1783), the Americans were forming into a “great nation” well *before* the British expanded into a “multitude of nations.” And the United States is much older than the British Commonwealth, which was not formally established until the Statute of Westminster in 1931.

SN: This point apparently contradicts previous points. Here, McNair admits that Britain was not a “multitude of nations” until 1931—before that time, it was a single empire. Yet, he uses Britain in the 1800's for their greatest time of wealth and military strength (see his following paragraph, also). Obviously, the two tribes are about the same age—they both go back to Joseph. In regard to becoming a separate nation and reaching their height of power, the British Empire clearly did this before the USA.

McNair: But think about this, too. Joseph gave up his tribal status among the Twelve Tribes of Israel to his sons Ephraim and Manasseh. These then became two separate tribes—meaning there were now THIRTEEN Tribes of Israel in all (though the count normally stayed at 12 since the Levites didn't have a territorial allotment in the Promised Land). Benjamin, Jacob's 12th son, then moved into the 11th position vacated by Joseph. And the 12th and 13th positions, if we reckon their births chronologically, would be filled by Israel's adopted sons, Manasseh and Ephraim respectively. However, because Scripture makes it

very clear that God, through Jacob, “set Ephraim *before* Manasseh” (Gen. 48:20), their two positions should be reversed—Ephraim being made 12th and Manasseh becoming 13th. (Note the recurrence of 13 in American heritage—13 colonies, 13 flag stripes, 13 *everything* on the Great Seal.) Thus Ephraim would inherit the birthright first and Manasseh would follow. And that is exactly what happened—the 1800's were the “British Century” and the 1900's have been the “American Century.”

SN: McNair uses an inconsistent approach by ranking the original 12 tribes according to age, then ranking the twin-tribes according to inheritance. If we are to rank the tribes according to inheritance, then Ephraim (though younger) is clearly the **1st** tribe with the greatest inheritance; Manasseh is **2nd**. If we rank the tribes strictly by birth date, Reuben is **1st**, Manasseh is **12th**, and **Ephraim is the 13th** (the second born of Joseph's twins). The 13 original colonies are then proof that the USA is Ephraim.

Since the nation of Israel is sometimes called “Ephraim” in the Bible (Isa 7:17, 11:14 Ezk 37:16), using inheritance to rank Ephraim “number one” seems more reasonable. Can it be that the 13s in the USA's origins also picture that some of all the 13 tribes dwell in the USA? The United States of America certainly has Jews, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Norsemen and all of the other tribes dwelling in it. The Eternal may well have wanted people from every tribe to take part in the good, the bad and the lessons to be learned in the USA.

McNair: It should now be crystal clear. Modern Ephraim is definitely the U.K., Canada, Australia and New Zealand, while Manasseh, without question, is the U.S.A.

SN: When we read an article that dogmatically states the same thing over and over (“Ephraim is the UK, Manasseh is the USA”), it is easy to begin believing it even if the facts do not support the conclusion. If we have believed something to be a certain way for 10, 20 or 30 years, we probably do not need to change our opinion over-night—we can take time to examine the facts. But unless some new evidence comes to light, **our conclusion is that the British Empire is largely the tribe of Manasseh and The United States of America is largely the tribe of Ephraim.**

—Norman S. Edwards

Local Congregations



Man in Korea Seeks Pen Pals

There are no congregations here in South Korea. I have kept the Sabbath by myself quite a long time. Please print my name and address in the *Servants' News*. I am married, 30 years old.

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Yongho 4-Dong, Namgu
Pusan 608-094
Republic of Korea

Sabbath Singles Connection

Attention single 7th day Sabbath Christians! Finally, a way to meet others that share your beliefs. In depth profiles, confidential, free details. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: SSC, 3229 Larkin Road, Biggs, California 95917.

Dallas Conference in January

The *Scattered Brethren* is hosting a **Scattered Churches of God** conference on January 3-5, 1997. The subject of the Conference will be the Holy Calendar which will include Passover, Postponements, New Moons, etc. It is the desire of the *Scattered Brethren* to help the north Texas area sabbatarians to come together and study the word of God and hear the latest studies on these subjects.

The conference will be held at the Hilltop Inn located at 5600 N. Central Expressway in Dallas. Those interested in making reservations for a room at the Hilltop Inn can do so by calling 1-800-537-8483. Forty rooms are blocked for the event at \$46 per room. Call by December 23.

Tickets are \$27/person, \$45/couple. The price includes a Mediterranean noon meal on the Sabbath. For more information, contact **Lawrence Maayeh at 214-785-0060 or P.O. Box 860471, Plano, Texas 75086-0471.**

¿Cuál es el día de reposo del Nuevo Testamento?

¿Sabe usted cuál es el día de reposo del Nuevo Testamento? Aprenda lo que declara su propia Biblia sobre este tema de vital importancia. Escribanos y pida el folleto gratuito titulado, "¿Cuál es el día de reposo del Nuevo Testamento?"

Diríjase a
Bible Sabbath Association
3316 Alberta Drive
Gillette, WY 82718
EE. UU.

Friendly Arizona Sabbath Seminar

Dear Mr. Edwards,
Greetings from Arizona. Pastor Ivan Blake of the Camelback Seventh-Day Adventist Church provided the beautiful setting for a Sabbath seminar on the weekend of November 9-10 in the shadow of Camelback mountain. The co-sponsors of this activity were Mr. Blake and the pastors of the three Phoenix UCG congregations: Roger Foster, Jim Tuck, and Chuck Zimmerman.

The featured speaker was Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi. His enthusiasm and zeal for **God's** Sabbath were inspiring. Mark Kaplan, a UCG pastor serving in California, also spoke. All speakers' topics were well received by those in attendance.

It was a great blessing to see our groups come together on our common ground. I pray that more such endeavors will be tried. I am a UCG member and I am very pleased in the willingness within the UCG to explore joint projects such as this. I do not know why I ever received *The Servants' News*, but I have gotten every issue and am constantly encouraged by your inclusion of tales of inter-Sabbatarian

cooperation. Please continue doing the fine work of serving all of GOD's children. You are in our prayers.

Your brother in Christ,

—David Meidinger

Faltering Calif. Sabbath Seminar

Dr. Samuel Bacchiocchi was surprised and disappointed at the UCG's home office lack of support for his October 18-19 Sabbath lecture. Dr. Bacchiocchi is the author of the book "From Sabbath to Sunday", and is finishing his book on God's Holy Days.

UCG's Home Office congregation meets in a Seventh Day Adventist's building. Dr. Bacchiocchi had been invited to speak there about his research on the Sabbath and God's Holy Days. He called the UCG pastor, Brian Orchard, to ask him to participate in the lecture and announce it to his congregation.

My wife and I went to the Friday night lecture and were told by Dr. Bacchiocchi that Brian Orchard had told him that he was "not supportive of this kind of activity." Brian Orchard also said that he "looks down on the Friends of the Sabbath."

This amazed Dr. Bacchiocchi because of how well he had been received by many UCG congregations this past year. He spoke fondly of how Mr. Dennis Luker had invited him to the Seattle area to speak to the UCG brethren there. The same was true with Mr. Chuck Zimmerman and Mr. Roger Foster in the Phoenix area; and Mr. George Crow in Houston.

The Saturday lecture was to start one hour after the UCG service was over, but just after the UCG service was over an announcement was made to everyone that the Seventh Day Adventists were having a lecture at 5 PM and everyone should leave in a timely manner.

—Harry Curley, Altadena, Calif

IBLC Off To a Good Start

The International Bible Learning Center reports that as of this month of operation, 1,000 have responded and the number is growing daily. This is an opportunity to take Bible classes or courses right in your own home via VCR or cassette tapes.

The IBLC is a nondenominational, nonprofit institution of higher learning dedicated to the restoration of the faith once delivered to the saints. One of the goals of IBLC is to make collegiate - level Bible courses available to persons of all ages and educational backgrounds.

The educational philosophy and purpose of the IBLC is guided by Christ's statement that the "worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24).

Therefore, the IBLC is committed to providing sound biblical instruction that respects and reflects the biblical teachings of the first-century Church of God. These doctrines of the Apostolic Church can be gleaned only from Holy Scripture. They are not the domain of any corporate or organizational structure. All organizations and corporate structures should rejoice in the efforts of any person or group that is committed to teaching and publishing the truth of the Bible.

Since the IBLC is not a church, we do not publish a codified statement of beliefs; we seek to explain and defend the doctrines of the Bible. The Holy Scriptures, not tradition or orthodoxy, serve as the authority for determining the veracity of any viewpoint. The only requirement for enrollment in the IBLC is a teachable heart and determined dedication to intellectual honesty.

Our Mission Statement: The mission of the International Bible Learning Center is to provide Bible courses relevant to the educational needs of Christians regardless of their church affiliation, age, educational background or socio-economic status for the purpose of educating, edifying and strengthening the faith and practice of Christians.

Current Course Offerings:
Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ—

Don Ward

Principles of Prophecy—Don Ward

Introduction to Paul—Ron Dart

Current Prophecy Seminars:

Church Eras -Don Ward

Place of Safety—Don Ward

Seventy-Weeks Prophecy—Don Ward

These courses will address some recent changes and doctrinal issues that concern many of us.

The three minicourses and the three prophecy seminars, 15 two-hour videotapes, can be ordered for \$146. The same courses and seminars on audiotape can be ordered for a cost of \$94. The cost of the minicourses on an individual basis is \$39 for video and \$25 for audio.

The cost of the prophecy seminars on an individual basis is \$10 for video and \$7 for audio.

Future Courses:

Introduction to the Old Testament—

Mark Kaplan

World Religions and Catholicism—

Gary Antion

Book of Daniel—Don Ward

Book of Revelation—Don Ward

Life and Teachings of Paul—Ron Dart

Stewardship in the Churches of God -

C. Wayne Cole

These Courses will be available by December 1, 1996.

The "course of the month" offered this month is Introduction to the Old Testament by Mark Kaplan, formerly an Orthodox Jew with a history degree from Brooklyn College.

Those interested in the Bible courses can contact:

IBLC, 7 Berean Way, Hawkins, Texas 75765 or call 903-636-4155, FAX 903-636-4098 or E-mail: IBLC@aol.com.

Have a Computer? Get a Bible!

If you own a computer, but do not have a Bible search and study program, you are missing out! Nearly all computer Bible programs allow you to search the Bible for phrases like "day of the Lord" or "time of the end"—searches that would be very time consuming with a regular concordance. Also, most of these programs allow the user to find every place a certain Hebrew or Greek word is used in the Bible—all using Strong's numbers—you do not have to read Hebrew or

Greek.

These programs are available in a variety of places and cost from \$30 to \$300 depending on the number of features and Bible versions available. Some programs include commentaries, histories, cross-references, lexicons, etc. Programs are available locally from most big software stores and Christian book stores. Large mail-order software stores will also have them—see the ads in computer or Christian magazines, or try calling 1-800-EGG-HEAD.

One of the best programs available for a low price is the Online Bible. The CD-ROM DOS version costs \$25 and the Windows version \$30. It has numerous English Bible versions, several foreign language versions (including French, Spanish, German & Russian), commentaries, cross-references and helps. The NIV, NASB, and NRSV are copyrighted and cost an extra \$20, \$20 and \$5 if you want to use them. Online Bible works fairly well directly from the CD-ROM, so you do not need much hard disk space. Online Bible specifically allows most of the non-copyrighted portions of their software to be freely copied to others—they show you how to do it. If you have a friend with this software, a few diskettes to transfer it and about 10 megabytes of free hard disk space, you can get a very useful program for free. This minimal system will run on old computers—DOS 5.0 with 640K. (If you do not know anyone with Online Bible, you may order a set of diskettes from Don Deist, 12415 Imperial Hwy #56, Norwalk, CA 90650, 310-863-1765 for \$15.) For the full CD-rom version, contact **Online Bible, PO Box 21, Bronson MI, 49028, 800-243-7124** or Web page <http://www.omroep.nl/eo/software/ps>.

—NSE

Lake Tahoe Feast Tapes

For those who are interested in obtaining the Lake Tahoe Non-Aligned Feast tapes, contact:

Mike Kawasaki

3229 Larkin Drive

Biggs, California 95917

916-868-5272

Please note that at this point, these tapes are free.

WHEN CHRISTIANS DISAGREE, WHAT DO YOU DO?

ample opportunity to present their views and evidence as the issue was examined from different perspectives. This

Recently, a Christian friend and I were having a discussion when it became apparent that we had both examined a topic from Biblical perspectives and arrived at different conclusions. In spite of our disagreement, we both could see that we were striving for the truth and basing our viewpoint on Biblical evidence. We came away from the discussion mentally stimulated, and our friendship and mutual respect was deepened in spite of this disagreement. While we experienced an amicable outcome to our disagreement, not all disagreements among Christians end so amicably. At times, people can disagree so strongly with fellow Christians on some matter that they “go their separate ways.” In some cases, disagreements among Christians have strained (or terminated) friendships and even split church organizations.

they find themselves in unresolved disagreements with other Christians? The New Testament includes several examples showing how early Christians reacted when they experienced disputes and divergent viewpoints. By examining these Biblical precedents, we can learn scripturally-based methods of not only coping with, but profiting from our disagreements.

Doctrinal Disagreements

The early church experienced doctrinal disputes on a variety of issues. One disagreement (involving circumcision) was so intense that a plenary conference was called to address the issue. Emotions were clearly running high as Acts 15:2 states that Paul and Barnabas “had no small dissension and disputation” with those holding the opposite viewpoint at that conference. Clearly, both sides in the Acts 15 conference had

was no wild “free for all,” however, as the literal meaning of the Greek word translated “disputation” is “joint seeking” (according to *Young’s Analytical Concordance*). This account indicates that while an uncensored airing of all viewpoints did occur, the disagreeing participants in this conference were “jointly seeking” the will of God on the circumcision issue.

There are several lessons for modern Christians in this account. The first lesson is that Christians can experience strong disagreements and vehement debate on doctrinal matters and still remain part of the same body of Christ. The Acts 15 conference allowed (even encouraged) the airing of all viewpoints in an effort to determine God’s will on the subject of circumcision. Clearly, God’s Holy Spirit guided the early church into a consensus decision on this dispute via an “iron sharpening iron”

What should Christians do when

Doctrinal Differences Among The WCG Splits

The following list of doctrinal differences between the many WCG offshoots was compiled between 1992-1995. Like Alan Ruth of Barnabas Ministries, I also began a comprehensive study into the more than 75 offshoots of the WCG. I began my research in a local library in Long Island, N.Y., in late 1991. My research has been ongoing and to date I have compiled a doctrinal statement on each of the groups I have contacted (except those that have moved or disbanded, etc.)

My hope is that these doctrinal points will be addressed in upcoming issues of your publication. In fairness to everyone, both sides of an issue should be presented. So far, some items on my list have already been addressed in your publication. Hopefully, if there is enough interest, the other points on the list will be covered as well.

1. Tithing
2. Church government
3. Carrying out a “witness and warning” (Ezek. 33; Matt. 24:14)
4. Voting, jury duty and politics
5. Belief in the “British Israel” theory (Lost ten tribes)
6. Belief in the E.E.C. as the prophesied “beast power”
7. Sacred names

8. Healing
9. Divorce and remarriage
10. The Festival of Unleavened Bread—how many days should it be observed, and should unleavened bread be eaten every day of it?
11. Belief in evangelizing (Matt. 28:19)
12. Observance of new moons
13. Hebrew calendar
14. Defining what constitutes the Gospel
15. Passover—14th or 15th?
16. Pentecost—Sunday, Monday or Sivan 6?
17. Church “eras” theory (Rev. 3)
18. Place of safety (also, is it Petra?)
19. Ephraim and Manasseh—U.S. and Britain: which is which?
20. The date of Christ’s crucifixion
21. The day of the week of the resurrection
22. Christ’s coming—is it in two phases?
23. Satan’s fate—will he be destroyed?
24. Conspiracy theories

—John Marmero, Jr.

2400 Shiloh Road Apt. #208, Tyler TX 75703
903-534-9004

We hope that *Servants’ News* will be able to address all of these issues over time, but that may take several years. This is a very good list to which we might add: Use of spiritual gifts, format of worship services, role of women, who can be converted, and how much Jewish “Oral Law” should be used by believers. We hope all brethren can grow and learn on these points without building walls between each other. —NSE

process. Through a full and open discussion of the dispute, the early church came to a consensus decision on the circumcision question and very likely prevented a schism over this matter.

It is also noteworthy that no one in the Acts 15 account was called a "heretic" or "disfellowshipped" simply because of a sincere doctrinal disagreement. This example indicates that the Christians are not to be removed from fellowship whenever doctrinal disagreements occur. Paul upheld this principle in Romans 14 while discussing vegetarians who were "weak in the faith." Romans 14:1 states: "Give a welcome to anyone whose faith is not strong, but do not get into arguments about doubtful points." (*The New Jerusalem Bible*). In Romans 14:10-13, Paul also advised:

"... why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother?... Therefore, let's stop passing judgement on each other! Instead, make this one judgement--not to put a stumbling-block or a snare in a brother's way." (JNT—*Jewish New Testament*)

In Romans 15:1, Paul concluded:

"So we who are strong have a duty to bear the weaknesses of those who are not strong..." (JNT)

Paul warned "strong" brethren (mature Christians who were doctrinally accurate) not to drive weaker brethren away from the truth (or church). All Christians need to realize that when disagreements occur, we do not "make points" with God simply by "proving the other person wrong." While seeking the truth on a disputed issue, we must also make every effort to avoid "giving offense" to those with whom we disagree. Interestingly, Romans 15:1 indicates that God puts greater responsibility on "the strong" for maintaining unity than he does on "the weak" (those who don't yet realize they are incorrect on a particular doctrine or issue).

In Matthew 5:46-47, Jesus Christ said:

"What reward do you get if you love only those who love you? Why, even the tax-collectors do that! And if you are friendly only to your friends, are you doing anything out of the ordinary?" (JNT)

It's easy for all of us to be friendly with those with whom we agree. However, Jesus' statement indicates that God learns more about our charac-

ter and maturity by observing how we deal with each other when we disagree than when we agree with one another.

Administrative Disagreements

Although Paul and Barnabas were allies on a doctrinal matter (circumcision) in the Acts 15 Conference, they soon separated over an administrative matter. Acts 15:36 indicates that after the conference concluded, Paul and Barnabas disagreed on whether to bring John Mark on an evangelistic tour. Verse 39 states: "the contention was so sharp between them, that they separated one from another" (KJV, marginal reading). Even though Paul and Barnabas were united on doctrinal matters, they disagreed so vehemently over an administrative decision (a personnel matter) that they had to "part company." Clearly, they remained a part of the same body of Christ even though their disagreement on an administrative issue caused them to go their separate ways.

There are lessons for modern Christians in the separation of Paul and Barnabas because of an administrative dispute. Notice that Paul did not feel empowered to enforce an artificial "unity" by "commanding" Barnabas to submit to his decision. Neither did Barnabas feel he had any authority to "give orders" to Paul. They "agreed to disagree" on the matter, and decided to serve God separately instead of jointly. Was God's Holy Spirit able to work through both Paul and Barnabas after their disagreement and separation? Of course! Both Paul and Barnabas continued to do God's Work, and there is no evidence that they ever saw each other as enemies or competitors. Perhaps there is a lesson in their experience for modern Christians and church organizations.

Disagreements Between Church Organizations

When one Sabbatarian church has beliefs that another Sabbatarian organization regards as false doctrine, can their members still interact and accept each other as Christian brethren? Consider the example of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3. All seven churches are acknowledged **by God** as being part of "his church." Yet God states that two of the churches (Pergamos and Thyatira) had embraced false doctrines. Pergamos had two false

doctrines (the "doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans") while Thyatira had embraced the false doctrines of a prophetess called "Jezebel." While God warned both churches to repent of their false doctrines, God had not abandoned or disowned them. We do not know how long God allows a church to repent of adopting false doctrine, but since God gives such churches (and people) "space for repentance" (Revelation 2:21) so should we. However, we must "hear what the spirit says to the churches," and make every effort to avoid false doctrines because they can weaken and jeopardize our relationship with God.

While God warned the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira to repent of their false doctrines, he did not call them "heretics." **There is no indication that any of the seven churches had abandoned God's laws.** God says to none of them, "You have abandoned my Sabbaths and Holy Days" or "You have forsaken my commandments." In Hosea 4:6, God makes it clear that he will reject those who forget his laws and reject his knowledge. Since Pergamos and Thyatira had not been rejected, they clearly had not forsaken God's laws. If any of the churches of Revelation had been guilty of openly rejecting key elements of God's law, Hosea 4:6 indicates God would have voiced neither tolerance nor patience with them.

The Ephesian church (which correctly hated the false doctrine of the Nicolaitans) may have regarded the members of the Pergamos church as a "bunch of heretics" because they had embraced this false doctrine. If so, their judgement would have been harsh and incorrect because Jesus Christ still accepted the Pergamos church as "one of his." Conversely, while the Ephesian church was very strong doctrinally, Revelation 2:4-5 shows they were unaware of their own attitude problem (i.e., "they had lost their first love") which was jeopardizing their relationship with God.

A lesson for us is that since God himself does not immediately withdraw his fellowship from people who have mistakenly mixed false doctrines in with God's true doctrines, neither should we suddenly withdraw fellowship from those who mistakenly accept a false (or merely "inaccurate") doctrine.

Furthermore, the letters to the seven churches reveal that there is much more to our relationship with God than simply being "right" or "wrong" on doctrines. The letters to the churches show that God regards both attitudes and doctrines as important factors in our relationship with him. Further evidence of this fact is found in God's words to the Sardis and Laodicean churches. God regarded the Sardis church as "dead" spiritually, and he strongly warned the Laodiceans about their "lukewarm" attitudes even though he attributes no false doctrines to either church (Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22).

Matthew 24:48 warns God's people that they should not "smite their fellow-servants" as the return of Jesus Christ draws near. Does it not follow that Sabbatarian churches should not "smite" (ostracize, judge, condemn) their "brother churches" as well? Like brethren in Christ, the churches of God should strive to edify each other and cooperate as much as possible. In John 13:35, Jesus instructed: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other." It seems self-evident that Jesus excerpts church organizations (as well as individuals) to heed that instruction.

Conclusion

Acts 15 records how the early Christian church handled doctrinal and administrative disputes. Because God calls people from very diverse backgrounds and perspectives, disagreements are inevitable. Today God's people are experiencing disagreements on doctrinal and administrative matters, and leaders and laymen alike are deciding (as did Paul and Barnabas) to "go separate ways" even as they both continue to "do God's Work." It is vital that we understand that the early Christian Church experienced similar disagreements. We all need to realize that when we disagree about doctrinal or administrative matters, we remain members of Christ's body and are still responsible to our God and Savior to continue to treat each other as "brethren in Christ." The above scriptures indicate that if Christians (and churches) can "bear" some disagreements among themselves and still "show love for each other," it is evidence that God's people are learning to walk in Christian maturity.

Steven M. Collins

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

Filling a Void

LETTER: July 30, 1996

Dear Servants' News:

Thank you for being! You fill a VOID nothing else can. Here's a little something to help.

—Linda Darrow, Chester, NH

RESPONSE: Thank you for your encouragement. Please see the back page for other publications helping to fill the void.

—NSE

Power of Holy People Scattered?

LETTER: September 13, 1996

Hi Norm,

Thanks for sending Mr. Webster's resignation letter along with your analysis. Please let me know of others who resign from GCG and/or resignations from any other CoG.

What do you think about Dan 12:7?

Later on,

—Paul

RESPONSE: We do not keep up with all the groups, but some recent departures from the WCG include: Rod Devries, Tom Heap, Boyd Mansanarez, Ken Swisher, David Wainwright and Scott Weiner. The GCG recently laid off some headquarters staff including Jeff Patton (former managing editor of The World Ahead), Bryan Weeks, Eric Myers and Ron Nelson.

Many people have asked if the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God is the fulfillment of Daniel 12:7 (NKJV): "... that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered ("scattered" in KJV), all these things shall be finished."

I do not think that this is being fulfilled now for two reasons:

1) The power of **the holy people is the holy spirit**, not the money or media buying of a big organization. I have seen more evidence of the spirit working in the last few years than I have during many years in hierarchical governments.

2) The timing does not seem right. It seems that the shattering or scattering occurs during this 3-1/2 "time" period—maybe even at the end of it—when "all these things shall be finished." If we look above, we see the resurrection is one of those things. We certainly have not seen the resurrection, nor do I think we are yet in the final 3-1/2 year period spoken of in other scriptures.

—NSE

Calendar Not Always "Postponed"

LETTER: August 16, 1996

Greetings Mr. Edwards—

I am a member of the United Church of God, Sacramento, Calif., congregation. I have been studying the Hebrew Calendar controversy, and came across an article you wrote titled "Biblical Calendar Basics". I found the article to be very balanced, constructive and helpful.

I have a question if you don't mind. With regards to the postponements under the Hebrew Calendar, specifically the one that prevents the Day of Atonement from falling on a Friday or Sunday: you mentioned in the article that there are several references in the Talmud which suggest that at some time prior to Hillel, this postponement was not being invoked.

Can you tell me what your source was for this information, or even better, can you identify the passages of the Talmud to which you refer?

Thanks for your help!

Keep up the good work.

—J C., California

RESPONSE: The passages are not directly about the subject of the calendar, but the footnotes in the Soncino Talmud all confirm that the day of atonement did sometimes fall on Sunday or Friday: The three passages are:

Shabbath 114b (See footnote 16)

Menachoth 100b (See footnote 12)

K'rithoth 19a (See footnote 10)

We hope this helps you in your study.

—NSE

Questions on Darrell Conder's Book

LETTER: November 5, 1996

To Whom It May Concern;

With things going the way they are, with all the confusion and people being pulled in every direction like a piece of meat, I am looking for as much information on this subject as I can find. So would you please send us your booklets:

"Modern Church, Divine Institution or Counterfeit?"

"The Resurrection of Christ - Is It a Fact?"

This last I find interesting in light of a book I recently read from 'Commonwealth Publishing' entitled "Mystery Babylon and The Lost Ten Tribes In the End Time."

Instead of commenting on it I will only suggest that you read it, you will be, well that would be giving it away.

Please feel free to E-mail us here for knowledge is what we are after, Knowledge and Truth that is. Hope to hear from you soon.

—Willis Rynerson

RESPONSE: We are currently waiting for a new version of "Modern Church, Divine Institution or Counterfeit?"—it should be ready in December. The other item you requested, "The Resurrection of Christ -Is It a Fact?" is a little 1-page 3-fold very basic item that was intended for complete Biblical skeptics, not for textual critics.

I have Darrell Conder's "Mystery Babylon and The Lost Ten Tribes In the End Time" and have read the first two chapters. I do hope to read more of it, but have so far been unconvinced by his often faulty reasoning and one-sidedness. Two examples:

He discounts the account of the spirit descending as a dove because the "pagans" used the dove as a religious symbol. Can you tell me a bird or an animal that the "pagans" have not used? If doves are "pagan," why did Noah (as recorded in the **Old Testament** which Conder believes) use a dove to find land?

He spends a great amount of time talking about the variation of Greek NT manuscripts, but so far has said nothing about the fact that about 99% of the words in the New Testament are **not** seriously disputed. I agree that many brethren today are ignorant of the textual issues of the NT, but they are no where as bad as Conder paints the picture.

Finally, I am not sure how Conder would explain all of the obvious miracles that have been performed today in the name of Jesus or Yeshua. I and others have experienced hundreds.

I will probably write something about Conder's book in Servants' News after I finish reading it.

—NSE

Music Praising Our Savior

LETTER:

November 5, 1996

Page 24

Dear Norman,

Re: **Sash** letter to SN, Sept/Oct 96

Greetings in the name of our King, and Savior, Jesus Christ. Please keep up the good work that you have begun with the Servants' News.

I could only shake my head in disbelief when I read the letter from John and Deb Sash regarding their refusal to worship Jesus Christ in praise songs during their FOT song service (SN, Sept/Oct 96, page 23). Bypassing Jesus as though He were common sounds a whole lot like some of us are still living the legacy of past mistakes and man's traditions regarding those "evil" Protestants and the "Us" and "Them" syndrome of an earlier elitist Pharisaical aristocracy. This brings several points to mind.

John and Deb Sash wrote that they "did not sing certain songs" because the songs "overly praised 'Jesus, Jesus' to the exclusion of God" and felt that "this was a reflection back to the Protestant 'misconception' of the Messiah, Christ." Further, they "could not in good conscience sing them." They wrote, "to ask us to sing them for the sake of unity ..." as though someone actually did ask them to do so in one way or another, and if so, they appear to have taken offense. Being unable to take part in a service due to painful memories is one thing, but refusing to praise Christ is quite another.

First, did anyone really get up and suggest that they all sing all the songs for the "sake of unity"? To suggest that some song leader might have voiced such an action (or that someone else might do so), without saying they actually did, is a curious bit of reasoning. Perhaps this ought to be clarified for the sake of those who led music at Martin's Landing.

Their refusal to worship Christ via an aversion to singing praises to Christ, who just happens to be THE Savior and the ONLY Door to the Father and salvation, vis a vis praising the Father, is particularly odd, and according to scripture, misguided. After all, He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And since Christ is the central theme of the entire Bible, praises to Him ought not be odious to any professed follower of Christ.

Second, Jesus Christ is worthy of all praise. Paul said in speaking of Christ: "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him (Christ) and given Him a name which is above every name, that AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW. . .and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil.2:9-11). Paul tells us in verse 6 that Christ was (and presumably still is) equal to God. (Oh, yes, the Father is to be praised, also).

Three things: (A) Jesus Christ has been highly exalted; (B) Every knee should bow to the name of Jesus; and, (C) doing so glorifies the Father.

How would you like it if you were the Father and someone snubbed your son, your only son who died to save all others, and refused to duly honor Him? (Most of us probably never give ten words of praise to Christ during any given week). But then along comes this same puny human in the next breath with the audacity to bow to you, seeking spe-

cial blessings, favors, and protection in the dishonored Son's name? Would you be inclined to grant those blessings? Hardly.

Jesus Christ has been exalted and should be praised daily because Jesus Christ is the present living King of the physical and the spiritual universe. All powers, whether physical or spiritual are under His authority. It is written that Christ has authority over ALL flesh (John 17:2). It is written that: "All authority" has been given Christ "in heaven and on earth" (Matt.28:18) It is written that: "Christ is the head of "ALL" principality and power" (Col.2:10) It is written that: "all things," whether thrones, dominions, or principalities, were created by Him, through Him, and for Him, and further states He is the Head of the Church, "that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Col 1:13-18). That means the number one slot, and includes preeminence in praise and worship. It is written that: "He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, and the firstborn over all creation" (Col.1:15). And it is written of Christ Himself that: "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15).

It is written that: in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col.2:9). And we are told to "beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to traditions of men ..." (Col. 2 :8) We are also told: "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall: (1cor. 10:12).

It is written by Paul: "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever" (I Tim.1:18). And in case we're not quite certain of the identity of this King that we're supposed to honor, Paul writes: that you keep this commandment... blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality ...to whom be honor and everlasting power" (I Tim 6*13-16) Jesus: Christ, described as "the Word of God," is further named "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 19:13-16). And this title "Kings of kings" is not future tense. Note that Christ is called "the ruler over the kings of the earth in Rev. 1:5, and in the same present-tense-salutation of Revelation, it is written of followers of Christ, that the One who washed us "in His own blood" from our sins, "has made us (present-tense) kings and priests to His God and Father." It is also written: "to Him (Christ) be glory and dominion forever" (Rev.1:5-6) As kings and priests today, our Head is Christ, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and Christ is due much honor, a lot more than many of us give Him. Jesus Christ is either King over all, or He is not King at all. And if we deny Him, He will deny us.

Should singing praises to Christ become a problem to anyone to any degree, beware lest our Savior feel the same way toward the person who would refuse to worship Him without reservation. We humans have not traveled beyond the necessity of boundless worship of the Son just yet. But all

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too often we use Christ as a sort of lower-case or second-class citizen God who only happens to be there because we need to insert His name prior to the final Amen of our prayers.. Heaven forbid we should pray TO Christ!

More often than not, all Jesus Christ gets from us are the crumbs that fall from our "worship" services. Maybe we ought to rethink our positions in this regard. He was a stumbling block to the Jews and Pharisees of the first century (1 Cor1:23); let's break the mold and give all the worship, praise, and honor due our King Jesus Christ without ceasing, thereby glorifying both the Father and the Son.

Sincerely,

—F Paul Haney
PO Box 370
Watertown, CT 06795

RESPONSE: Thank you for your response to this letter and your desire to help John and others with such questions. I think many will find it helpful. I did. I personally had trouble singing "Protestant" songs, even though the message was acceptable, for many years. Your points showing how it is Biblical to praise our Savior are very solid and well demonstrated—much more thorough than my response to John Sash's letter. The scriptures you used make your point very well

However, when we write or speak corrective words, it is not good to make someone else's difficulty worse than it really is. Your example of the Eternal not being inclined to answer prayers of someone who refuses to praise His Son is going too far. First, "lack of praise for Jesus" is not specifically among the things named in the Bible that could keep an individual's prayers from being answered or keep him out of the Kingdom. John was not "refusing to honor his Savior" as you imply, but refusing to sing songs that seemed to ignore the Father. There are at least ten times as many scriptures telling us to praise the Father as the Son. Indeed, the many Protestant songs praising Jesus to the exclusion of the Father probably come from the idea that "the Father gave the harsh old law and the Son came to do away with it." However, as you and others have pointed out, it is Biblical to praise the Son as well as the Father.

Correction should be given with love, mercy, and the understanding that we have made mistakes of our own. The purpose is not to show that the "corrector" knows something that the "corrected" does not know, but to help the "corrected" learn. It is much better to show people the right way and keep comments about what is wrong to a minimum. Sarcasm and put-downs usually cause people to lose interest and give up on the correction. Many years ago, I can

remember people telling me I was "in bondage" in the WCG—had they factually pointed out the scriptural difficulties with government rather than use such strong words, I might have seen the problems then. It is best to start a correction by explaining what the other person is doing **right** and by showing an understanding of why they might be making their mistake.

Keep up your good work. We continue to get requests for your publication, *The Fellowship Commentator*.

—NSE

Answering the Lord's Prayer: A Step in the Decay of the Faith?

LETTER: August 25, 1996
Dear Mr. Edwards,

Your long essay "Answering the Lord's Prayer" was definitely thought-provoking, but a call for greater generalized (ecumenical?) Christianity may be another step in the great latter-day decay of the true faith—the "great falling away" (2Thes 2:3)... toward homogenized Christianity and global religion.

Rather than generalized Christianity—which did not yield miracles and great growth when the church was united under Catholicism in early centuries—perhaps we must keep seeking new truths and visions until we get the right combination! Mr. Armstrong took major steps in this direction, but more are needed, since he stopped too early to focus on building his denomination, WCG, which was not miracle-prone although it did grow spectacularly—and now much of it is falling away, as predicted.

What "new truths" are needed? All I can say is, keep reading the Bible. Keep studying. Keep praying. And keep publishing new concepts. Sooner or later the right combination will spring forth via the Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ,

—Gary Semanison Calgary, Alberta,
Canada

RESPONSE: When this article referred to other people who the Eternal might be working with, it was not advocating generalized Christianity of any kind of ecumenical movement. The vast majority of "Christians" do not know what they or their church organization believes and their religion has little influence on their life. We are saying that there may be people who did not come from "Church of God" groups that have the holy spirit—people from which we can learn some things.

Thank you for your encouragement.

Interesting Commentary from Spain

LETTER: August 4, 1996
Dear Mr. Edwards,

Thank you for your short note informing me that a package of literature had been mailed to me by surface. It has meanwhile arrived. You were as good as your word. Thank you for all "Servants' News" and other literature which I am still in the process of reading.

I am amazed at the multitude of new churches and groups and ministries which have cropped up, and practically all in the USA. It would seem that not only all that is bad comes from America, but also a lot that is "good" or what passes for good. Then, nobody is good and neither are their works. The hierarchical structures still go on in the big churches and even more so in the new UCG. But also a lot of these individual groups and ministries are suffering from the same, as it were, ingrained attitude of the churches they used to belong to. They all refuse to answer letters, either because they are supposedly too busy or they are still under the misconception that only what they tell is the truth. If you make any enquires or argue about one or more points in their articles, you normally will not hear from them again. Some of these groups or ministries or whatever you want to call them have new truths, like when the Sabbath starts and how long it lasts, from sunrise to sunset, as it is mentioned in the Bible, "remember to keep my Sabbath day holy. " Or that the Passover is a High Day Sabbath. There are plenty of issues which should be debatable by the readers of all these various publications, but there does not seem to be an organ amongst all these entities which stimulates readers' participation.

RESPONSE: It is interesting that you mention most of the new ministries being in the USA. That is probably natural in that the USA was founded on the principle of individual and private effort. While much of the freedom in this country is gradually being eroded, it is still possible to start a ministry without any need to gain the approval of the government or any other controlling body.

We are sorry to take so long to respond to your letter. We are sad that this is such a common problem. As more people come to help us, we will try to make sure that every letter requesting an answer receives one. The only reason we do not answer let-

ters is for lack of time. We are not afraid to say we do not have the answer to a Bible question.

Organizations that teach they are the only, or the main "True Church" on Earth have a different problem. They get doctrinal questions that they cannot answer, also, but it is very hard for them to tell anyone that. If they say that they do not know or if they answer it wrong, it would be hard to claim that they have a special relationship with the Eternal—especially if the letter-writer asks the same question of other groups and gets better answers from them than the "One True Church" organization.

We will also be honest with you and say that most groups tend to give a lower priority to international mail. There is a great tendency for circulation lists to grow large, and for contributions to be small. We will send the same literature to international individuals that we send to those in the USA, but we often use Surface mail which can take a couple of months.

We agree that there are plenty of worthwhile issues to be covered and we hope to cover some of them in Servants' News as time permits.

LETTER: So when someone suggested to start the LRCG, the Living Room Church of God, I became very enthusiastic and wrote a letter to the gentleman concerned making a few suggestions how to get this off the ground. Neither to this letter nor a previous one did I receive a reply. Someone in Canada sent a lot of interesting literature without me having asked for it, all new truths. I shot a few holes in it and that was the last I heard from these people. Another gentleman who calls himself a prophet and is the only one "with all the truths" also sent uncalled for info, very interesting indeed, but as soon as I pointed out some untruths and doubted some of his sayings, I never heard from him again. And so I can go on, there are plenty others. It seems all they want is the same as what the WWCG wanted, pay, pray and no say. Someone heading a group of 3000 followers threatened me with the wrath of God because I did not agree with what he said, and because I had asked him why he never had acknowledged my freewill offering, etc. His magazine makes interesting reading but it is more "flash" than "prophecy" so I disassociated myself from this man.

RESPONSE: We are continually amazed at how many groups are ready to severely judge others who do not understand the Scriptures as they do. Numerous scriptures show that we are not to judge the eternal fate of others now, but that it is being withheld for a later time. To me, pro-

nouncing a judgment now in the name of the Eternal (unless he supernaturally tells us His judgment) is breaking the third commandment.

LETTER: So what is going on Mr. Edwards? Will we never get rid of all these high-handed, proud and haughty ministers who still are of the opinion that they are the know-it-alls, "God's special representatives through whom God only is making himself known"? I am a lone brother in the wilderness of Spain. Can you imagine that I get pretty discouraged by all this? After the WCG debacle I was hoping that things would change, no more government from the top down, but from the bottom up. Thank you very much for the article "How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?" A very thorough study indeed. But will it ever come about? You are one of the few propagating this. I know Jim Rector is, see attached, so why do not you get together and work this out further? Why is there so little unity amongst the brethren or striving for unity? Why does every group, ministry, etc., want to carry on on its own? Is everybody more interested in having his own power base than working together for the glory of God? Are we not all working for the same goal, finding the truth of the Bible, bringing the gospel, expanding the work of God?

RESPONSE: Jim Rector, Ray Wooten, myself and others do work together. We share many of the same ideas on government, local congregations, spiritual gifts, etc. We speak at each other's Feasts, Services, Conferences, etc. We recommend each other's publications. Yet, we do not agree on every point of doctrine. If we tried to consolidate into one organization, discuss doctrine until we all agreed (or "kicked out" those who didn't agree), and set standards for all of the local congregations—we would find ourselves creating a organization very similar to what we left. We believe that the key to unity among the brethren is to accept others even if we have some doctrinal differences and to rely on the power of the Eternal to do His work through us rather than trying to create a big organization that will do the work.

In cases like your own, where you have years of Bible study but nobody with which to fellowship, I suggest that you seek the Eternal's will and, if He encourages you, start a congregation in your own area.

LETTER: It seems to me that for each individual the best way to go about finding the truth is to get as much information as possible together, read it all, digest it all, meditate over it, check it out against the

Bible, and then come to a personal decision, whether right or wrong, because God will know that we have exerted ourselves and done our best to get at the truth even though the truth will escape us most of the time. Because why is Elijah going to come back other than to restore all truths? So how much truth have we come up with? Probably very little. Maybe we will all be surprised in the very near future how many of our cherished truths will turn out to be fallacies.

RESPONSE: We agree! Some groups believe that Herbert Armstrong was the Elijah and restored all things—yet they have added their own "new understanding" to his teaching. Truth #1 of Armstrong's 18 restored truths was government—he taught that the Eternal would always correct the man "at the top," but most people now realize that He lets some human leaders do what they want. Nevertheless, it is amazing how many groups acknowledge that Armstrong was not the Elijah, yet they think they have 90% or more of the truth anyway. To us, it is obvious that we need some kind of direct revelation to help us understand so we can more perfectly worship the Eternal and do His will. If that revelation is from "Elijah," may the Eternal speed the day of his arrival.

I noticed that you do get a lot of mail, so one more or less will hardly add to the workload. I imagine you are a very busy man and that there hardly even will be time for individual answers. So I am not expecting too much in that respect. Still I hope you realize, and I wish others would, that it gives a lone brother away in God's spiritual boondocks quite an uplift if he receives a personal note or letter once in a while from teachers situated in a faraway country like the States is for me.

I read with interest you "Biblical Calendar Basics" article. I hope you will let me have the follow-up article in due course. There seems to be too many calendars around. I take it that you know what the "Book of Jubilees" mentions, that a year has 364 days and that Israel will go wrong if they do not keep a 364 day year. "For this reason I command you and testify to you that you may testify to them; because after your [Moses'] death your children [the Israelites] will disturb them, so that they will not make the 364 days only, and for this reason they will go wrong as to New [cycles] and seasons and Sabbaths and festivals [Jubilees 6:38] Also there were apparently 30 days in each month from the 2nd month till the 7th month according to Gen. 7 & 8.

[literature request deleted]

Thank you again for all the material sent, thank you for the wonderful work you are doing. Maybe I will hear from you some time. May the God of Israel bless you and all those working with you.

Sincerely yours

—Jurjen Kuipers Postema
Aptdo. Correos 75
03530 La nucia, Prov. Alicante
SPAIN

RESPONSE: We hope some of the other *Servants' News* readers who have time to correspond will write to you.

I have not studied the book of Jubilees, but I am aware of a number of calendar systems that propose either a fixed length year, or a fixed length month. The problem with a 364-day year is that it deviates from the Sun cycles by 1¼ days each year. After 146 years with such a calendar, the summer and winter months will be completely reversed. Genesis shows that there were five months in a row that had 30 days, but it does not say that every month has 30 days. If people at that time were observing the moon to start lunar months, it is possible that clouds from the flood obscured the new moon and they used the maximum length month (30 days) five times in a row. This is especially likely since there may have been many cloudy days and nights right after the flood. Also, 29½ days is the average length of a lunar month., Even with perfect weather, the observable newmoons do not always occur in alternating periods of 29 and 30 days. There are sometimes multiple 29-day months and sometimes multiple 30-day months in a row. I need to learn a lot more about the calendar.

I pray that you hold fast and that you find fellowship with other believers.

—NSE

Member since 1959 Comments on Various "COG" Literature

LETTER: November 13, 1996
Dear Mr. Edwards:

I wish to thank you for sending me your article, "How Does The Eternal Govern Through Humans?", and the last 2 issues of *Servants' News*. To say I was impressed would be putting it mildly. I'm sorry that I didn't subscribe earlier, but have found the overwhelming majority of COG literature to be virtually worthless to me. Please don't misunderstand. I'm not saying there aren't any good articles in the literature of the various COG publications, but for someone who started attending Radio COG in 1959, I just can't see reading the same old, same old over and

over. The Bible is a huge book with many subjects, but only a handful are ever addressed by these groups, RM's statement that GCG "preaches the whole truth", to the contrary.

The only 2 exceptions I've found are *The New Millennium* put out by ACD and *Prophecy Flash put out by Triumph* COG. PF can get pretty far out at times, but overall, I think they have a lot to offer. Now, I'm happy to say the exceptions are up to 3, thanks to *Servant's News*.

For several years I've been reading and studying material—magazines, newsletters and books from 3 sources: Sacred Name groups, Messianic Jewish groups and books and articles by Orthodox rabbis in addition to some Orthodox rabbinical newsletters. I can truthfully say my spiritual knowledge and understanding have literally exploded in this time. Though WCG did teach some truth, they were only kindergarten level compared to these other people. I'm not saying that to be mean—I'm merely stating a fact.

After stating all of the above, you can imagine my delight upon reading about Sacred Namers, Messianic Jews and Orthodox Jews in your literature. SUPERB! It was also wonderful that some of your people attended a Sacred Name conference. As I'm sure you're aware, there is much intolerance against Sacred Namers in the COG community and near persecution especially from CGI, where Sacred Namers were branded as a major heresy at the FOT in 1994.

While it seems that more and more brethren are looking into things Jewish, there is, on the other hand a growing and ominous trend in many other COG groups and even in some Sacred Names groups to deride, belittle and plain out lie about Jews and Judaism. Some have gone so far as to accuse the Jews of human sacrifice.

I have found that when I learn something from a Jewish source and try to share it, I'm met with either silence or disbelief or, in some cases, outright anger. If I share these things without giving the source, it is usually accepted. How sad!

Mr. Edwards, I would like to ask you 2 questions now. #1 I notice that you say The Eternal, Our Father, The Messiah, The Savior again and again. You seldom, unless in a direct quote, use God and Christ. Are you on the verge of accepting the Sacred Names? I am not being judgmental or critical, but I know that some people do this when making the transition from the common titles to the Sacred Names. I know it took me longer to accept them than it should have. I nibbled around the edges of this for a very long time. I am asking my question strictly out of curiosity.

Speaking of Sacred Name groups, I know personally of 2 who are extremely dogmatic

and judgmental. Lots of knowledge but not much humility or mercy. YNCA (Yahweh's New Covenant Assembly) is totally unlike them. They put out an excellent magazine called Light. Please let me know if you would like their address.

My 2nd question is of a different nature and I'm sorry I have to bring it up. In the August 1996 issue of *Servants' News* on page 11 a mention was made of a Dan Gayman of Missouri. Though a Missouri phone number was given for him, his church or assembly affiliation was not given. His presentations were described as "incredibly energetic and powerful". By now you are probably wondering what my problem is. So, without further ado, I know of a Dan Gayman from The Church of Israel in Schell City, MO. This group IS RACIST BEYOND BELIEF. They say that the Jews are the literal, physical seed of Satan and that "non-whites" are the beasts of the field" created before Adam was created. They also, call them Anthropoids. They put out a series of tapes on ANTHROPOIDODOLOGY. I have 8 tapes from them, but have only played one to date. One statement on the tape is that in major American and European cities many white people disappear., never to be heard of again. Their explanation is that they are kidnapped and EATEN, YES, EATEN, BY BLACKS. Mr. Gayman has a booklet entitled, "Do All Races Share In Salvation?" He feels only whites do—he was quoted in *The Sabbath Sentinel* saying this many years ago. I wrote a letter of complaint to TSS and they dropped this group from advertising in TSS. Mr. Gayman is considered to be the most desired and coveted speaker by the Aryan Nation.

Now it is POSSIBLE this is a different Dan Gayman, but 2 Dan Gaymans from Missouri who both are fantastic speakers seems to be more than coincidental.

Now, it is ALSO POSSIBLE that Mr. Gayman has repented of this horrific evil and has instructed his followers to do likewise, but I sincerely doubt this. I have seen not a thread of evidence that he has changed in this regard. If you know differently, please advise. This sin, like any other sin if repented of. will be forgiven. Please comment on this whole matter. If this is the same Dan Gayman, and he is unrepentant, please WARN YOUR READERS ABOUT HIM. These people are more than wrong. THEY ARE DANGEROUS.

After all of this unpleasantness, I would like to place an order for the following materials: [Literature request omitted.]

I thank you for your kind attention to this letter.

Sincerely,

—Mrs. D S

RESPONSE: It is unfortunate that so

July 12, 1996

many Sacred Name groups are so dogmatic. Many of them take the approach that if you do not pronounce "the Name" exactly their way, you do not have salvation. This is especially difficult to understand when we realize that we know of no group who used their pronunciation prior to this century. Nevertheless, there are many sacred name groups who are more accepting of others—they see it as one of many important, but not essential doctrines. I believe the sacred names groups have an undeniably good point when they teach that "Lord" is a bad translation for the Eternal's name: YHVH. Hosea 2:16-17 shows that there are people who are using the wrong names for the Eternal:

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

The word "Lord" means "master" and conveys neither the sound nor the meaning of the Hebrew YHVH. "Lord" is a good translation for "Baal," which means "master" or "boss." This is probably what the above verse is referring to. Note that the Eternal recognizes that people are talking to **Him** when they use these names of Baals, though He does not like it. This is in contrast to the teaching of some groups that unless we use the right name, He is not listening. I have read conflicting research on the origin of the words "God," "Christ" and "Jesus." Some say they are essentially more "names of Baals" and others say they are reasonable words representing the "Supreme Deity," "the Anointed" and "the Greek version of the name Yeshua." For now I use "Eternal," "Savior" and "Messiah" because they are accurate descriptions and not offensive to most readers. If I decided to use a particular pronunciation for the name of the Father or the Son, it would take me months of research before I could adequately defend the one I chose to use.

I think we are talking about the same Dan Gayman. I understand he believes the "Satan's Seed" doctrine: that Blacks, Jews and maybe some others are physical descendants of the Devil and are not able to receive salvation. They will quote scriptures such as John 8:44 to prove their idea. How they resolve all of the clear scriptures that talk about converted Jews, even Pharisees like Paul, I do not know.

We completely disagree with this doctrine and are sad that so many have held it for so long. The reason is probably similar to why some of us have held onto false

doctrines for a long time: because we met primarily with people who agreed with us and spent little time investigating what our group believed. When we did study, we looked for things that only reinforced our belief. For example, whenever we saw democracies or committees in trouble, we said, "that is because they don't have 'government from the top down'." When we saw autocratic religious leaders who led their people to disaster, we did not talk much about form of government then. Similarly, there are stories of modern cannibalism in this country (often associated with Satanism) by both whites and blacks. Gayman's group might only look for instances where blacks did it, and then falsely assumes that other whites that disappeared for unknown reasons were eaten.

If people with these doctrines remain isolated, they may grow worse and worse in them. If they are willing to mix with other Sabbatarians, they may realize that the truth of the Gospel is what is important and that these bizarre doctrines are not helping them. Also, working together with them provides alternatives to people in their groups that may come to an understanding of their error, but wish to continue in the part of their doctrine that is good. Most of the other doctrines held by this group are clearly from the Bible and you and I would have little disagreement with them.

The one teaching is wrong, but little more wrong than the many groups which say you be a part of their group have salvation. In the New Testament, we found many who had a very difficult time believing that Gentiles could be saved—it was common for Jews to call Gentiles "dogs" (Matt 15:26-27). Others, who were considered believers, taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1).

I know of people who believe the "Satan's seed" doctrine who attend with some of the major "Church of God" groups, though they do not actively push it on others. They may not be very effective in preaching the gospel to blacks and Jews, but they can be otherwise kind and serving in a congregation. We hope they will see the error and eventually change. If someone begins to take evil action: vandalizing, robbing or killing people they believe to be "sub-human," then I feel that the Eternal's people must separate from them lest an evil name be brought upon us. If you have any evidence that this has happened, please let me know.

—NSE

LETTER:

Dear Norm,

Thanks so much for sending the Servants' News to us, both back and current issues. Enclosed is a small donation to help continue this service. My husband and I are very happy with the meaty articles and have been telling everyone about them. It is doing much to break down the "barriers" among the peoples of God. At this time we would also like to request the following literature [request removed].

A thought on unity. I think that Jesus Christ gave us the perfect definition of unity. We are called the Bride of Christ. We are likened to a body, each with differing functions. Has it occurred to us to wonder if maybe, because each of us humanly are unable to comprehend the fullness of God, that He, in His infinite wisdom gave each of us a small part of what He has to understand? Then He tells us to "esteem others better than ourselves." Would it not stand to reason that we are to esteem others as greater because God gave them a portion of Himself that He did not give us and that maybe we are to learn from one another, and if we learn from one another with humility and love and learn to work with one another that together we would constitute a fit Bride for Christ? We don't have to think exactly alike on every doctrinal issue, but we must strive to act exactly alike in love for each other, truly esteeming others better than ourselves. Most of all striving to become vessels fit for the service of God and Jesus Christ. I'm not very good at putting into words what I feel, but I feel one of the reasons God has scattered us is so we might learn the definition of true, Godly, unity.

Again, thank you for the wonderful service you are doing.

With Christian love,

—Judy Blackney, Chilcoot, CA

RESPONSE: We appreciate your thoughts very much, and hope our readers will as well. When Paul discusses the many members in our Savior's Body (1Cor 12), he warns against one part trying to be another part **and** against one part saying to the other: "I have no need of you." If we look at our own human body, we find that it is designed to deal with imperfection: If we cut ourselves, strain a muscle or break a bone, our body has mechanisms to repair the damage. We do not "cut off" a member simply because it failed to do a job or because it is injured. It remains a part of the body and the rest of the body will compensate for it until it heals. The only time we do "cut off" a member is when it has gangrene—is so badly injured that it will never recover

and leaving it on will certainly destroy the rest of the body. And when it does go, it goes with sadness.

—NSE

Go From One Despot to Another?

LETTER: August 4, 1996
Dear Mr. Norman Edwards,

As "members" of the WCG (I'm ashamed to say) for a long time, my husband 33 years and myself 25 years, we are beginning (!) to have a serious conscience-conflict with the leadership and their doctrines.

Their governmental system is ALL wrong.

Their doctrines follow the Protestant line.

That's fine for the Protestants, but they're not my example; Christ is!

We're not going to go from one despot to another. Hence, we are interested in what your group, if may use that term, has to offer.

Christ's way is simple and loving and no burden at all. We need to read and hear a wide variety in order to grow mentally. We need some outside stimulation on spiritual matters where we are free to discuss, even disagree.

We're no longer willing to "check our brains at the door" or abdicate our personal responsibilities regarding our spiritual lives. We, individually, are accountable for our choices before God.

Please, would you put us on your list of subscribers for Servants' News. Hope [amount removed] is sufficient for costs, etc.

Thanks so much.

—D. M., New York

RESPONSE: We appreciate your desire to seek for truth, not to simply believe what another organization claims is truth. We hope that many of the "church organizations" will wake up and realize that there are many like you who do not believe "the Eternal allowed the demise of one human organization so that men could leave and build a dozen others just like it." We hope that all of these groups will teach their members and preach the gospel to the best of their ability—and stop proclaiming their own "rightness" and acknowledge that the Eternal is working through others.

—NSE

Servants' News Production Cost

LETTER: August 1, 1996
Dear Servants' News,

Please send me all back issues of Servants' News that you have available, up to but not including the July 1996 issue. I enclose a check for [amount removed] to help defray your expenses. Thank you.

How much does it cost you to produce and mail each copy of your publication? You have

a fine work here and it seems a very cost-effective one. Others could certainly learn from your example (esp. the no copyright).

Sincerely,

—Arlene Schroeder, Yorktown, TX

RESPONSE: We keep back issues in stock and are always glad to send them to anyone who asks. It costs us about 35 cents to duplicate one 30-page issue (including paper). We can mail it first class for 78 cents or bulk for about 30 cents. I have already purchased the \$6000 machine we use to duplicate it. At this time, the local Michigan brethren are freely giving their labor to collate and prepare the issues for mailing.

The cost of producing the master copy of the newsletter is considerably more. It takes thousands of dollars of office space rental, computers, telephone bills, etc. Much of that is done by volunteer labor, but I work at it full-time and it is expensive to house and feed a family of six. We mail a statement of our receipts and expenses to everyone who contributes over five dollars every three or four months—and a complete statement at the end of the year.

—NSE

UCG Elder Likes Government Paper

LETTER: August 6, 1996
Dear Mr. Edwards,

I am a subscriber to your newsletter and consider it quite helpful. Your articles on "Oh how I love your law" are insightful. I feel that the manner you reply to letters is a good way.

I have read your paper on "How Does the Eternal Govern Thru Humans?". I understand your article and believe it. I am a Local Elder in the UCG and was an elder in WCG since 1963. Do you find many ministers in any of the "Churches of God" coming to the conclusions stated in the article?

[lit. request deleted]

Enclosed is a check [amount removed] to carry on your activity for God. We wish you well.

—Texas

RESPONSE: We have heard from a number of "ministers" and "elders" who believe hierarchical government is wrong and believe the work should be done by people filled with the holy spirit. They understand that their "ordination" does not make them a minister, but their service does. However, it is a little more difficult to find individuals that actually begin to work on that basis—but there are some.

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans has some mistakes—some Greek interpretations that are not utterly provable. Some people have rejected it due to these comparatively minor points. I plan to revise

it during the next few months and produce a new version that will be much harder to reject if one is honestly seeking truth.

—NSE

What Are Your Qualifications?

LETTER: July 30, 1996
Dear Mr. Edwards,

I got my "In Transition" of July 22, 1996 this morning. In the column NEWS & NOTES of the Churches of God I have read that you have moved to Charlotte. I am not sure whether my letter of July 17, 1996 sent to Springdale AR has arrived and been forwarded to your recent address. That's why I send you a copy of my letter to you again.

I hope that you will respond to my questions on page 3 and let me know whether the original letter with enclosure to you has arrived in the meantime. I am sure that you will be extra busy because of the move to Charlotte, so I will have to be patient of course.

[His question was:]

Is your work a One Man Work? What is your "Curriculum vitae" [brief biographical resume of one's career] in the religious field?

Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

—Frans Louwinger, the Netherlands

RESPONSE: I personally do more of the work for Servants' News than any other one person, though it could not be produced without many volunteers. Much of the writing, editing, and even decisions as to what will go in each issue are in the hands of those who volunteer help.

I do not feel that my personal background is all that important. I would never want someone to believe what I say simply because I have "great qualifications." If you can verify what I teach is from the Bible and history, and if the holy spirit confirms it, then you can use it. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed of my past:

I attended with a variety of Protestant and evangelical groups while growing up (near Denver, Milwaukee, and Seattle). I began attending with the Worldwide Church of God as a high school Senior in 1973. I graduated first in my class from Ambassador College in 1978, majoring in business and theology. I worked for the WCG through 1992 in technical areas that brought me in personal contact with many in that organization. I resigned to be one of the original members of the Global Church of God where I served as Secretary of the Board, as editor of the Global Church News, on the doctrinal committee, etc. I resigned from the GCG in 1994 so I could study independently. I began Servants' News in the spring of 1995, not really knowing whether it would ever economically support my family or not.

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

Literature List

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

Mature Literature

- The Apple of God's Eye** by Jim Rector, 13 pages. God's love for us is far greater than we imagine, and we often take it for granted.
- Assembling on the Sabbath** by Norman S. Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.
- A Call to Arms** by Jim Rector, 16 pages. Lessons for today from Revelation 2-3 including the oppressive doctrine of the Nicolaitans and the doctrine of Balaam.
- Basic Bible Study Tools** by Richard Nickels. 36 pages. An excellent summary of available Bible study aids and how to use them. Samples of many study aids included.
- Biblical Calendar Basics** by Norman S. Edwards, 10 pages. Introduction to the issues about the Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)
- By What Authority?** by John A. Duffley, 10 pages. A brief overview of authority and its structure in the New Testament churches.
- Does the New Covenant Do Away with the Letter of the Law?** by Eric V. Snow. 42 pages—revised Jan. 1996. A "must read" for those who feel it does.
- Did Christ Reorganize the Church?** by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1939, 8 pages. Very different than his later approach: Christ never set up a hierarchical government.
- The Heart of the Matter** by Jim Rector, 31 pages. Our calling is to spiritual growth, not just attendance, socializing, politeness or legalism.
- How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?** by Norman S. Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today's congregations.
- Just What Does the New Covenant Do?** by Joseph Chunko, 18 pages. Explanation of the difference between the law, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.
- The Letter to the Galatians, a Paraphrase with Built-in Commentary** by John McCauley. 18 pages. Lively vernacular paraphrase with some notes on book of Galatians.
- Where Is the True Church Today?** by Jack M. Lane, 18 pages. How can there be so many similar groups, yet one true church? What is required of members? Read and see.
- The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles** by Alan Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of church history.

Basic Literature

- The Bible Sabbath: Seventh Day or First Day?** (From the Bible Sabbath Association) 2 pages. Basic Sabbath tract.
- Does the Bible Permit Christians to Eat "Unclean" Meat in New Testament Times?** by Steven M Collins. 14 pages.
- Christian Educational Ministries Correspondence Course** by Ron Dart. First lesson from SN. Others free from CEM.
- God's Purpose for Your Life** by Fred McGovarin, 40 pages, half-size booklet. A "first booklet" for people just becoming interested in the Truth. It introduces Hebrew names (Yahweh and Yashua) for God and Jesus.
- The Key to the Book of Revelation** edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 12-page 9"x4" booklet.
- Lazarus and the Rich Man** edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.
- The Resurrection of Christ—Is It a Fact?** by Don Hudgel. 2 page tract for those skeptical of the Bible & resurrection.
- Why Do You Observe Sunday?** edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.

Study Resources and Information

- Barnabas Ministries Mission Statement** by Alan Ruth. 2 pages.
- The Christian Beacon** Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter "for the shared ministry of the Royal Priesthood."
- A Church of God Ministry Order Form** by Lon Lacey & friends. 1 page. Free literature on nature of God & Satan, Biblical law, prophecy, history, church government, etc.
- The Fellowship Commentator** by F. Paul Haney. Sample 8 page issue of free quarterly newsletter.
- Giving and Sharing Order Form** by Richard Nickels. 3 pages. Has many excellent free items, low prices on hard-to-find religious books, and fine literature on floppy disk.
- Hebrew Roots** Sample 24-page issue of free newsletter with emphasis on the Hebrew roots of "Christian" belief.
- History Research Projects Order Form** by Craig White. 6 pages. Hard-to-find books on the origins of nations.
- The Modern Church, Divine Institution or Counterfeit?** by Peter Kershaw. 24 page booklet. We do not agree with all of it, but it has good legal info on unincorporated churches.
- In Transition** One free sample issue of 16 page newspaper. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups.
- Sabbath History** edited by Leon Lyell in Australia. One free sample issue of 26-page newsletter about the history of Sabbath keepers & groups. There is nothing else like it.
- The Sabbath Sentinel** One free sample issue of 16 page glossy magazine—doctrinal & human interest articles. With Bible Sabbath Association order form: Sabbath books & tracts.
- Servants' News & Norman Edwards Statement of Receipts and Expenses**, 2 pages. (Always sent to contributors.)
- The WAY** Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter of doctrinal articles relating to the Biblical way of life.