

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 4, No. 5

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

July 1998

New Edition of How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? With This Issue

For those of you who have been waiting for this paper, we are sorry for the few months delay—but we hope it will be worth it. This edition of *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans* is almost twice as long as the last edition, and much of the original material has been rewritten. Numerous evaluations and criticisms of the paper were considered in this rewrite. Errors were corrected, speculative material was removed, and much additional proof was added for the important points.

The basic message is the same as the last edition, but the explanation of church leaders is improved. The first edition de-emphasized most human authority in the church, whereas this edition affirms the human authority that is described by the Bible, but shows that these leaders must be appointed by the Eternal, not by the human system of ordination.

Another major change is the removal of names and terminology unique to “Church of God” groups—not because this terminology is bad, but so the paper can appeal to a wider audience. **We must remember that the clergy-laity concept is a great hindrance to spiritual growth in numerous other Sabbatarian and Sunday-keeping organizations.** The main reason that Seventh-Day Adventists do not keep the holy days is **not** because they have studied them in the Bible and found them unnecessary. It is because their church-ordained leaders do not teach it, so the people see no need to study it. Similarly, people in Sunday-keeping organizations do not study the Sabbath because their hierarchies or ministry assure them that Sunday is the day. **Understanding individual responsibility to the Eternal should be one of the first steps to understanding truth.**

We realize that *How Does The Eternal Govern Through Humans?* is now the size of a small book. But we encourage you to read it—in however many sittings it may take. The world is going to plunge into a great amount of confusion after January 1, 2000, if not before (see *Servants' News*, Dec 1997). Many people, some of them religious, will be standing up claiming to have the solution. You need to know what kind of religious leaders you should trust and accept, and why.

—Norman S. Edwards

How Narrow a Gate Are You Entering?

Enter by the **narrow gate**; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matt 17:13-14).



Neither main-stream Christianity nor Judaism has produced peace for their followers—neither between nations nor in the lives of their families. The average person who goes to a Church or Synagogue goes for an hour or so, then goes about his business—little affected by his religion. Most *Servants' News* readers are familiar with the above scripture and are also accustomed to a religious lifestyle that appears somewhat “odd” to most people.

That is the way it has to be. Those preaching salvation through Yeshua (Jesus) in the first century seemed odd to the other Jews. Later, Gentiles who stopped practicing their pagan religions to believe in Jesus seemed odd to their neighbors. These believers were almost always in the minority. Indeed, many were ostracized, and some were persecuted and killed for their beliefs. They had to worship the Eternal as they understood. They knew of the many warnings against incorporating false religion:

Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them [false gods], after they [Canaanites] are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.” You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods (Deut 12:31-32).

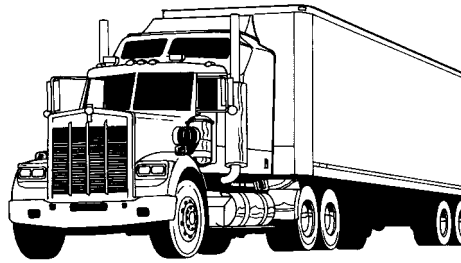
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Trucker's Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo., Part 4



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The Truckers' Bible Study is conducted weekly at the Texaco truck stop on I-70 in Oak Grove, Missouri. Arlo Gieselman, a member of the Church of God 7th day started the study. He is often assisted by Lenny Cacchio.

July 12, 1998: A family of three (including a first grader), and two gentlemen attended. We began again with the Bereans and the need to search the scriptures and test any Bible teacher or religious literature against what the Book says.

The husband and wife were both at one time Catholics. She had made the rounds to many religions including Mormonism, but they are settling now into the Baptist church. Consequently they brought up some of the problems they had with the Catholic approach and the lack of scriptural base for many of the teachings.

This led as a springboard into Hebrews, and how Jesus Christ is our only High Priest and the only intermediary we need between God and man. On the other hand, Peter indicates that we are now a royal priesthood as well, and we should reflect God's way of life to those who are not Christians as a way of pointing people to God.

What is the Gospel? The family did not understand the meaning of this term (Good News), and we talked about this in context of the new movie "Armageddon". How can the "end of the world" be considered "Good News"? This led to a discussion of Revelation 19 & 20, the return of Christ, the millenium, and the eventual salvation of the majority of mankind. Paul told Timothy that God has not given us a spirit of fear, and if a teaching is based on fear, then it is not of God.

July 19, 1998: Two people attended, a driver from North Dakota and his girlfriend. Both are very independent, intelligent, and articulate. She is Native American, and the fellow was more or less accepted into a Native American family as a child. Listening to her description of the Native American approach to religion was enlightening and I suppose could be the subject of a full length essay on its own.

She is studying with the Jehovah's Witnesses right now at his encouragement on the theory that one needs to study all sides of an issue and then decide. His main interest is what we might call **conspiracy theories**, and he had more ideas than I can relate here. I listened for some time, then related my take on the subject. I was unable to find the scripture until I got home, but the force of it can be found in Isa 8:11-14 (NIV), but I was able to describe the principle:

The LORD spoke to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people. He said: "Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.

Conspiracy theories tend to bring a siege mentality and paranoia. God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of hope, as Paul told Timothy. It also causes us to focus more on the negative instead, become suspicious of others, and keeps us from addressing the real problem, which is sin and abandoning God and His ways. Do I believe there are internationalists in government who want to surrender some of our country's sovereignty to the UN? You bet I do! But that's not the real problem.

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

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

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Local Congregations



Sabbath Campers Fellowship

Date: August 21-23, 1998.

Sabbath Schedule: 10:00 AM: Sabbath singing. 10:30: morning service. 12:30 Potluck lunch. 2:30: afternoon Bible study, evening sing-along.

Purpose: Fellowship, worship, Bible instruction, and recreation.

Speakers: Ray Wooten, Jim Rector, Alan Ruth, and Norman Edwards.

Location: Hillsdale, Michigan at the Gateway Park Campground near the Indiana and Michigan state borders—the same location used last summer.

You are welcome to come for the entire weekend, though many plan to come just for the Sabbath. For more information on this fellowship opportunity, see the local news section of March/April 1998 issue of *Servants' News* or call **George or Pam Dewey** at 517-543-0853 for more details.

Canada Christian Renewal Conf.

The **August 29-30** conference will be held at the Ramada Inn in **Toronto** which is located on the QEW and Trafalgar Road in Oakville. For more information, call Scott or Teresa Cox at (905) 528-9373 or see our website at www.cemnetwork.com. This event is sponsored by Ron Dart's Christian Educational Ministries.

Ray Wooten Travel Schedule

August 21: Hillsdale, Michigan

September 12: Houston, Texas

For more information, contact United Christian Ministries at 888-985-9066 or write PO Box 361725 Hoover, Alabama 35236.

Lexington Conference Summary

Once again, we had a great spiritual week-end in Lexington on June 20 and 21, 1998. The conference was a great success, with attendance of 150. Thanks to all the brethren who were **July 1998**

there. Special thanks to the speakers: Ron Dart, Ray Wooten, Mike Linacre, Jim O'Brien. We were spiritually fed both days. Thanks to Larry Keenan and Garry Cain for the beautiful song service. We also heard from the beautiful voice of Stacie Horlick from Canada on Sunday and also at the potluck on Friday evening. It is good to see small groups come together and forget our differences and be at one with God. Hope to do this again next year!

—James and Jeannette Hicks

Goshen, Indiana Visit Summary

The Greencroft Retirement Center Community Building in Goshen, Indiana was the location for approximately 60 brethren to gather on Sabbath, July 4. **Ray Wooten**, guest speaker and pastor of the United Church of God, Birmingham and Director of United Christian Ministries combined a family reunion with requests to visit the area. The sermon, entitled "Search the Scriptures", dealt with the revelation of Jesus Christ throughout scriptures in the Old and New Testament. Based on John 5:39, the sermon cataloged the prophecy and foreshadowing of Jesus Christ from the book of Genesis forward. Technical difficulties with the sound system did not dampen the enthusiasm of the brethren, but rather gave them added opportunity for fellowship before services began.

Many members renewed fellowships as well as established new ties with brethren who hadn't before been with us. Special music was provided by Mr. Mark Farmer singing, "Take Now My Voice" and was very inspiring and uplifting. Carol Guinn accompanied the assembly for hymns. Most of the brethren adjourned to a local restaurant to partake of a meal together and continue the fellowship for several more hours. Mr. Wooten was extended an open invitation to visit and speak whenever he was in the area.

—John Davis

Combined COG Get-Togethers

The following two e-mail messages were forwarded to *Servants' News*:

We had a United/Global cookout at our home for Father's Day, and we had over 50 people. It is wonderful to get back together with our friends who still believe as we do. There is no reason why others can't initiate those get-togethers on their own. Maybe some day we will have a "trickle up" affect and our leaders will get together. Just think how much money we could save having combined services: sharing rent on one building, freeing up resources to preach the gospel, etc. It would probably bring some of the Living Roomers out too.

We really have to learn to live with ourselves before we can become kings, priests or teachers in the World Tomorrow.

The Second E-mail Message:

On Sunday we had a wonderful and spiritually healing day. The Global Church of God had invited the Denver area churches to their annual picnic. Of course we went, and were eager to get back in touch with the people we had lost track of long ago. There were a few we had kept in touch with, but many we had lost track of.

It was wonderful! There were people there from WCG as well, and maybe even other groups that I was not aware of. Some people came from as far as Wyoming to participate. This was well over 100 miles one way for them! We all had that one thing in common and we **talked** about it! I got to see teens, now married and with children of their own, that used to get together with my teens years ago. Boy....did I feel OLD!

We all brought a main dish and a side dish to share. All of us sat around and talked together regardless of where we were or were not affiliated. I am **sure** God was pleased with His people that day!

I would like to see **all** of God's peo-

ple doing this no matter where they live. I found it to be a very warming and healing experience. I look forward to the next time we do it.

Servants News comments:

We cannot help but ask: who is causing division among the COG's? Is it the people, or is it the leaders? It sounds like the people in the above example were not having any trouble with each other—they would be glad to meet all under one roof. But some leaders might be unhappy about anything that might change the current flow of tithes and offering to their headquarters.

There is another question we should ask. Most of the COG's will claim in their evangelism that they have the "government of God" and the understanding of how world peace will come—can anyone honestly believe those claims when they see all of the different COG groups that will not work with each other or even talk to each other? Herbert Armstrong got away with telling people his organization was "the one true church" because nearly all of the people in it did not know of any other group that taught similar doctrines. Today, nearly everyone in the COG groups is aware of other groups with similar doctrines. It is almost completely unreasonable to bring a new member into a COG, try to convince him or her that this is the "main place" where God is working, and then pretend like all of the other COG groups do not exist! —NSE

UCG-IA Personnel Changes

The UCG-IA announced a large number of personnel changes July 10 as a result of budget cuts and ministers leaving to work with other church organizations. Most UCG-IA ministers will have some change to their church circuits. Employment changes include:

Going on half-salary:

- John Bald, Corpus Christi TX
- Steve Buchanan, Tucson AZ
- John Cafourek, Olympia WA
- Todd Carey, Williamsburg VA
- Jim Chapman, Red Bluff CA
- Tom Clark, Wichita KS
- Randy D'Alessandro, Detroit MI
- Tom Damour, Bloomington IL
- Wayne Dunlap, Eureka CA
- John Elliot, Cincinnati OH
- John Foster, Charleston WV

- Bruce Gore, Birmingham AL
- Ken Graham, Grand Rapids MI
- Jim Haeffele, Greensboro NC
- Vernon Hargrove, Hammond IN
- Don Hooser, Dallas TX
- Noel Horner, Portland OR
- Bill Jacobs, Albuquerque NM
- Bill Jahns, Salt Lake City UT
- Dave Johnson, Atlanta GA
- Otto Lochner, Columbia SC
- Ken Martin, Macon GA
- Jim O'Brien, Cincinnati OH
- Richard Rand, West Palm Beach FL
- Camilo Reyes, Salem OR
- Earl Roemer, Honolulu HI
- Mark Welch, Tulsa OK
- Roger West, Cape Girardeau MO
- Mark Winner, Louisville KY

Laid off, terminated or resigning:

- Don Billingsley, Modesto CA
- Bob Boraker, Kent, England
- Glenn Doig, Oakland CA
- Roy Dove, Shreveport LA
- Steve Elliot, El Paso TX
- Tom Fitzpatrick, Providence RI
- Dave Havir, Big Sandy TX
- Don Hornsby, Harrisburg PA
- Steve Le Blanc, Modesto CA
- Marc Masterson, Franklin Lakes NJ
- Brian Orchard, Los Angeles CA
- John Orchard, Omaha NE
- Cliff Veal, St. Cloud MN

UCG Big Sandy News

The United Church of God, Big Sandy congregation, which terminated its affiliation with the UCG-IA on May 16, has continued the process of establishing itself as a completely independent congregation by making revisions to its constitution and by-laws. Meanwhile, according to an interview published in the July 31 edition of *The Journal*, a group of approximately 25 former members of the UCG-IA in Tulsa, Oklahoma, has made an official request to associate with the Big Sandy group. In addition, Dana Francis, member of the Tulsa group, said that they had proposed that "the formation of a wider association should also be considered as a service to many scattered congregations and individuals who might have a desire and even a need for such an association." Francis clarified that this suggestion did not include "a headquarters which would rule over the various associated congregations or that these congregations would need to give up their identity as individually organized church-

es. Due to the size and resources with which it has been blessed, we believe that the Big Sandy congregation could be instrumental in the formation of such an association."

Church of God (Hulme) News

According to articles in *The Journal* of July 31, David Hulme has announced plans for production of a new quarterly evangelistic magazine, as well as an international monthly member newsletter. The newsletter is to be produced by the UK affiliate of the COG (Monrovia). UK elder John Meakin is to be the managing editor of the quarterly magazine, scheduled to be launched in January, 1999.

Hulme recently made trips to England, Switzerland, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Australia. In June, over 400 UK UCG-IA members and most of the ministers decided to affiliate with Hulme's group, and in July, the entire UCG-IA congregation in Switzerland made the switch.

As of June 27, the total number of individuals reported to be "on file" with Hulme's new group was 2,300. More than 60 elders have affiliated with the group.

WCG Doing Christian Holidays

For about ten years, a variety of individuals in and out of the Worldwide Church of God have said there was a plan in place to move the WCG from its former doctrines to mainstream Protestant doctrines. However, such a plan was never officially confirmed by the WCG leadership. After the WCG's conference of June 22 to 25 (for regional pastors and international regional directors), *Worldwide News* articles and sermons by conference attendees have confirmed this as a fact.

Over the years, many doctrines have been changed, such as the nature of God, British Israelism, prophetic and historical interpretation, etc. They even changed **reasons** for observing the Sabbath and Holy Days to "WCG tradition" rather than commands of God, but they did not change their actual practice. These are doctrines that affect one's belief system, but not one's daily life. Individuals were still free to believe the old doctrines, yet remain members. But recently, doctrines affecting the

1998 Feast of Tabernacles Sites Update

No matter where you are going for the Feast, those providing your site can plan better if they know you are coming. We recommend that you write or call them and let them know your name, address, telephone number, how many adults, teens, and children are coming with you, and the areas in which you would like to serve (choir, special music, youth classes, etc.).

Gatlinburg Feast Information

Parking permits for the city lot (Reagan Lot) are available for a flat \$15 fee. Since parking costs \$3 each time that you park at the convention center, this will save you money if you come every day. If you come for evening activities, it could easily save you \$30 during the Feast. The permits may be obtained by sending a request for an **October parking permit**, a self addressed stamped envelope, and a check for \$15.00 to:

Atten: Cathy / The City of Gatlinburg
PO Box 5 / Gatlinburg, TN 37738.

Limited Room in Rapid City

There is still room for a few people at the non-aligned Feast in Rapid City, South Dakota. A variety of sermons and open forum studies will be held at the Travelodge, 800-456-0061 or 605-343-5434. For more information, ask for Bill Buckman at 605-342-2048.

San Antonio Combined Feast

The Association for Christian Development (ACD) and the Christian Church of God of Amarillo welcome everyone to attend the Feast. Speakers include Whaid Rose and Bob Wertz, Church of God (7th Day); Dr. Philip Arnold, NT Scholar and national authority on cults; Les Stocker, minister and president of Braille Institute; Brian Knowles, former editor of WCG's Good News magazine; Ken Westby, Founder of ACD. Musical and family events are planned. Contact Jeff Booth, Christian Church of God, PO Box 51248; Amarillo, TX 79159-1248; tel: 806-53-4400; e-mail: lonestar@arn.net.

—Jeff Booth

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actions of the members have changed. In many congregations, members no longer adhere to the "clean meats" rules, so church meals can be a "pick and choose" operation for those who do. And now, the WCG has officially incorporated Christmas and Easter into their "Annual Worship Calendar" and made

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Sacred Names Feast Sites:

All are welcome to the following sites where the Sacred names ("Yahweh" and "Yashua" and some similar forms) will be used in messages and conversation. Please contact the persons listed below for more information:

Assembly of Yahweh, P. O. Box 102, Holt, **Michigan** 48842-0102, or 1017 N. Gunnell Rd., Eaton Rapids, Michigan 48827. Contact person: Pastor Sam Graham, phone 517-663-3724. Dates: Oct. 7-14.

Assembly of Yahweh (independent) Taneyville (Near Branson) MO Contact person: Bob Saforek, 148 Arrowhead Lane, Rockaway Beach, **Missouri** 65740-9563. Phone 417-561-5242. Dates: Oct. 6-13.

Assembly of Yahweh 7th Day, P. O. Box 509, Cisco, **Texas** 76437. Contact person: Elder Voy Wilks, phone 254-442-3962. Dates Oct. 6-13.

—Frank Brown

UCG-UK Feast in North Wales

Everyone is welcome to attend the United Church of God Feast site this year in Conwy, North Wales. For more information, contact: Gerry Russell at 888-274-9639 or fax 904-737-4116.

Feast 98 in Filey, UK

All brethren area welcome to the Feast in Filey on the coast of Yorkshire. A full programme of services, seminars, studies and other activities is planned for the Festival—you are welcome to as much or as little as you like. Our smaller numbers make for an intimate festival site, with lots of opportunity for new friendships!

Filey is a small town on the east

Holy Days completely optional. Notice these principles from the *Worldwide News*:

1) For personal or cultural reasons, some members may choose not to participate in certain celebration occasions. In the spirit of Romans 14, the church accepts this

coast of England, with a mile of sand and described as "unspoilt and elegant featuring one of the east coast's finest bays". You may obtain an accommodation brochure from the Tourist Information Office (Valley Bridge Parade, Scarborough, Yorks YO11 1UZ Tel: 01723 373333). Make reservations soon. We will be pleased to arrange accomodation for overseas visitors—let's know your requirements.

A registration brochure will be mailed to those who request a copy. Contact us at Churches of God, UK PO Box 2525, LINCOLN LN5 7PF England or phone 01526-860508, e-mail: coguk@aol.com

—James McBride


Torah-Based Feast in Colorado

Speakers include Sam Bacchicchi, John Garr, and Avi Ben Mordechai. For more information: Jere' Cannon, PO Box 385, Lakewood, CO 80214; 303-238-0102; e-mail: Dalbs@aol.com.

Sun Valley, Idaho Site Canceled

The Millers have announced that there was not sufficient interest in the Sun Valley, Idaho site to continue it this year. They wished to thank those who did cooperate and express interest. For more information, call 760-941-6120.

Picayune Site Not Christian

Servants' News has learned that the sponsor of the Picayune, Mississippi Feast site listed in our last issue does not believe in Jesus as Savior. Although **some** of his teachings are similar to that of Darrell Conder (Commonwealth Books), he is not associated with that group. 

and makes no judgment. Rather, every congregation seeks to provide for the worship needs of all its members.

2) The Lord's Supper may be held at various times throughout the year, but it is shared denominationally with footwashing annually during the Crucifixion and Resurrection

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season.

3) The traditional seven annual festivals may be celebrated on the nearest appropriate weekend.

4) The Festival of Tabernacles may be conducted as a weekend celebration, or as an eight-day event.

5) Special worship offerings are collected on Resurrection Sunday [Easter], Pentecost, the first day of the Festival of Tabernacles, the Last Great Day and the days on which Unleavened Bread, Trumpets, Atonement and the Incarnation [Christmas] are celebrated.

Notice that they no longer recognize a need to keep the Holy Days on the day in question, but move it to a convenient weekend. Point one, above, is a good summary of the WCG reasoning for making these changes. They made no effort to give a Biblical explanation of why these new holidays are good and why the Holy Days can be discarded; they made statements like "God likes variety", and stated that some of their members wanted to keep Christmas and Easter, and did not want anything to do with the Holy Days, so they wanted to serve them.

We at *Servants' News* see nothing wrong with not being critical of those who observe non-Biblical religious days in ignorance. This is something that many Church of God members need to learn. But it should be the job of the spiritually mature to teach the days that the Bible teaches, not to make it easier and easier for people to observe unbiblical "holy" days!

The change from Sabbath to Sunday is progressing along similar lines. The WCG headquarters now has a 9 A.M. Sunday service (along with 11 A.M. and 4 P.M. Saturday services). About 20% of the entire WCG now attend on Sunday. More and more Sunday services are being scheduled, and Sabbath services are being discontinued in a few places. News in the WCG emphasizes the Sunday services. If one new person begins to attend because the WCG offered a Sunday service in a particular area, it may make the Worldwide News. If twenty people quit the WCG because their Sabbath service was discontinued, members may not hear a word about it.

On a positive note, we feel the

WCG has set an example of cooperating with other groups when there is something that will benefit their congregation. The Big Sandy youth ministry hosted a *True Love Waits* worship service on May 23 (Sabbath). During the service, the parents and congregation committed themselves to supporting the teens in their promise to remain sexually pure until marriage. While the program is not the answer to everything, it does have a fairly good track record of helping teens stay out of the world's sexual mess, and getting a good start with a solid marriage. It is far better than the local pastor who gives a sermon once per year telling teens "that if you don't stop your fornicatin', you'll be headed for the Lake of Fire".

The way to work with other groups, is to respect them, learn what they do well that is in accordance with the Bible, and continue to do what we already do well that is in accordance with the Bible.

—NSE

Any More Old WCG Hymnals?

We would like to thank the people who sent several boxes of old WCG purple Hymnals. We have sent out about 100 copies to a variety of congregations requesting them. Our latest request completely depleted our supply—and we have more requests. If anyone knows of any unneeded Hymnals, please send them to us and we will send them to those in need.

Most of the Hymnals that we received and sent out had the edges completely taped. They were all still serviceable, but definitely very well used. We help distribute these hymnals because we believe it is important for brethren to get together and praise the Eternal with songs that they know. But we hope that congregations will think about the impression worn-out hymnals will make on visitors: "Is this a church of the living Christ, or is it a group trying to live in the past?"

—NSE

Enjoys Praise & Worship Book

Our Kansas City church invited Norm Edwards as a guest speaker June 6. While they were here, Marleen sang two numbers for Special Music—accompanied by Norm. Most of us really liked the songs, which we had never

heard before. After services, I asked Marleen where they were from. She showed me the Maranatha Praise Chorus Book. That reminded me of an earlier message on the LikeMinds Internet list about hymns. The same book was mentioned—which most people were positive about.

I ordered one of the books and we did three new songs from it at services today. We'll keep trying it for a while, and if everyone agrees we will buy some to use as a supplement to our current hymnal. I have really enjoyed playing these songs last week and highly recommend it. Thanks to Norman, Marleen and LikeMinds for bringing it to our notice.

—Paula Frazee

[I do not believe that the Maranatha Praise Chorus Book (expanded third edition, red book) is the answer to everyone's needs for music for services. But if a group hopes to grow, it should use a song-book 1) for which more copies can be easily purchased, and 2) visitors can recognize at least some of the music. There are songs in this book that we do not sing because of their doctrinal error—but it is easy to "not sing" them. On the positive side, over one third of the songs in the book use lyrics from the Bible. The book has a Scripture index in the back. —NSE]

HWA & WCG Libraries

Friends of mine are undertaking a project to collect as many old WCG video tapes and audio tapes of HWA (including the World Tomorrow), GTA, Hoeh, Meredith, McNair, Dart etc for a Churches of God library to ensure that these memories and truths are kept alive. They will be loaning them out to whomever so wishes.

If anyone has any tapes they would like to copy or donate to the library, please let me know asap. Or you can send me a list of the tapes you have and we may be in a position to ask you to copy them for us and we shall pay for them if we can.

May I also encourage others to create similar libraries in your towns to keep these precious truths and memories alive.

—Craig White, GPO Box 864
Sydney, Australia 2001
craig@triode.net.au ☐

What Is the Basis of Biblical Unity?

by John Meakin (with commentary by Norman S. Edwards)

A true and genuine unity is the hallmark of the people of God. Where does it come from and what is its basis?

I am quite sure that everyone reading these words has at least one thing in common. We all want to be together in unity. We don't like it when circumstances seem to conspire to drive us apart from each other. Long-held friendships can be placed under strain as friends become affiliated to different, seemingly competing, organisations. Relatives and family members can end up with differing loyalties and convictions which hardly facilitates family unity. We are not built to keep moving from one fellowship to another.

When the brethren of God dwell in unity, this is supremely precious to God. David wrote: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). Is there any basis for this unity? If so, where does it come from? When we don't have it, what are the causes? How can we become more unified? Is there ever hope of reconciling and dwelling in unity once more?

Modern Threats to Unity

The scriptures highlight many threats to unity at the time immediately before the return of Christ. These threats are societal trends, which are all around us, and with which we have to cope. Most of us are familiar with the following references: Because iniquity abounds the love of many waxes cold (Matt. 24:12); there will be perilous times of great selfishness (2Tim 3:1-5; 4:2-4); there will be false teachers (Acts 20:28-30; 2Pet 2:1-3); many false teachings and attitudes will be prevalent (1Jn 2:18-22; 2:26; 4:1-3, 20; 2Jn 7-11; 3Jn 9-11). All these factors and more are potent sources of disunity prophesied for our times. Sin and lawlessness lead to division at whatever level—interpersonal, family, neighbours, church or nation.

The question of how the Church is best governed for our modern circumstances has always been an ongoing controversy. Individual and collective shortcomings in leadership have only fuelled such controversies.

The Disunity at Corinth

The Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians provides a fascinating view of a divided Church congregation and how the Apostle Paul went about encouraging greater unity. We can learn much from the principles involved.

There were numerous problems to deal with—party spirits; competitive attitudes to spiritual gifts; the sin of fornication and resultant pride; sexual and marriage related problems; worldly wisdom versus Godly wisdom; envy; strife; divisions and carnality; going to law against brothers; temple prostitution; meats offered to idols; ministers living off the gospel; mixing pagan and Christian worship; women's head covering (hair length); Passover celebration abuse; abuse of speaking in tongues; disbelief in the resurrection. Quite a list!

How did Paul go about dealing with all these issues? "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1Cor 1:10). The Greek word for 'judgment' is *gnome* from *ginosko* meaning 'to know'. We are to be of the same 'knowing' or 'opinion'.

How to be of One Mind

This represents a considerable challenge. How can a disparate group of people called by God from very different backgrounds be welded together in such a way that they are all "of the same opinion"? The answer to this question provides the key to understanding how we today can have unity—it reveals the true source of our unity. We need to ask what this 'same mind' and 'same opinion' refers to? It is not your mind or my mind which is in view. It is the mind of Jesus Christ Himself.

We should not follow human individuals or factions. We are to follow Jesus Christ. Indeed we are to "put on (be clothed with) Christ" (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27). We are to embody His attitude, outlook and thinking. We are to take on the 'mind of Christ' in every way.

The Corinthian church was severely deficient in this mind and thinking. They were full of envying, strife and divisions (1Cor. 3:3). As a result Paul called them 'carnal'. They were 'babes in Christ' and he could only feed them 'milk'. Every single one of us is subject to these wrong attitudes—they are attributes of the human nature we all possess. When any of us thinks this way—whether at the level of a local congregation or at a higher level of Church leadership—a breakdown in relationships will result and division will be unleashed.

NSE commentary: Paul did say that the brethren in the church at Corinth were "babes" and "carnal". However, the "Church of God" groups are divided far worse than they ever were. The Corinthians allowed each of their members to participate in services (1Cor 14:26), but COG groups will not usually allow a minister from another group to speak in a service. Also, the Corinthian brethren had many miraculous spiritual gifts (1Cor 1:6-7; 12:1-31), but today we have very few.

Unity Flows From God's Spirit

How can we receive this mind of Christ? It is God's gift to each of us at the time of our conversion when God, through His Holy Spirit, imparts to us His nature. That nature grows as God's spirit is renewed in us (Rom 12:2; 2Cor 4:16). The chief characteristic of God's mind is love (Gal 5:22; 1 John 4:4, 16). That love "has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us" (Rom 5:5, NEB).

John Meakin is an elder in the Church of God (headed by David Hulme) and lives in England. Norman Edwards does not necessarily agree with everything in Meakin's article and Meakin does not necessarily agree with Edwards' commentary.

It is God's Spirit, and the way of life it inspires, which should bind us together in unity. Paul pleads: "But above all things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Col. 3:14). True unity results from abiding in Christ and producing the righteous fruit of God's character.

The wonderful news is that we can be unified—be of the same opinion—when we all share the mind of God and Christ. We are called to be members of one body—to be in organic union with each other as members of the Body of Christ. We are called to be part of one spiritual organism dwelling together in perfect unity.

NSE commentary: This is true! However, we must realize that we do not all have the complete mind of Christ now. Our learning is biased by a variety of Bible translations, Bible teachers, and our own experience. We all should be working toward the mind of God and Christ, and can have unity as long as we allow for other brethren whose learning is not yet at the same place as our own.

Unity is a by-product

What this means is that the unity we all so earnestly desire, actually flows as a side-benefit or by-product from our individual calling and relationship with God. In Col 2:2, Paul talks about us "being knit together in love". The tense in Greek tells us this is a "done deed"—it is already accomplished. However, the present tense is used in v. 19—being "knit together" is an ongoing process, because we are in continuing contact with the same head.

Through conversion we are "joined" to Christ (1Cor 6:17). The Greek word here has the sense of 'glued'—the bond is strong and enduring. The direct comparison in context is with a sexual relationship, which serves to emotionally bind or glue two people together (v. 16).

We are planted (NKJ "united") together in the likeness of Christ's death and shall be in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom 6:5). Notice that this unity stems from our relationship with Christ—through our symbolic death at baptism; our ongoing Christ-like way of life; and the common hope we share of the coming resurrection to eternal life. In John 17, in Christ's final prayer of His human life, He prayed for the unity of those God had called. "...keep through

your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are" (v. 11). Jesus Christ especially focused on the unity of future disciples (see vs. 20–23). That includes us today!

We Already Have Unity

Did God hear and answer His Son's prayer? Of course! He made possible this unity with one another, yet this is only possible because we have oneness of nature with God and with Jesus Christ. We might call this '**vertical unity**', though I appreciate this is not a biblical description. But what about organisational unity? Is this also in view? Can we not work in unity with those around us—something we might characterize as '**horizontal unity**'? A husband/wife relationship is an ideal example of where such 'horizontal unity' should exist.

To the extent that we share the same mind of Christ in all areas of our thinking, we will want to work together with others, sharing Christ's own goals and purposes. It is a sad commentary on the human condition that none of us perfectly embodies the mind and thinking of Christ. Breaches and offences are caused, and we do not remain in the unity Christ made possible.

NSE commentary: The statement "we already have unity" is correct. We are not waiting for some human leader to arise and unify us, nor are we waiting for someone to publish the "perfect doctrinal statement" or "perfect organization plan". We have as much unity as we and other believers will allow. All we need to do is ask for the love of Christ to love the brethren, and then trust Him to correct those who reject us—in His way, in His time. Most disunity among brethren is caused by various kinds of offences, and that is indeed sad. However, we must also recognize that some disunity is also brought about from honest disagreement on the meaning of the Scriptures and the will of God. This is where love and patience of Christ to correct come in.

Unity is also one of the major themes of the book of Ephesians. The mystery of the Church—the forerunner of the kingdom—is that in Christ "all things might be gathered together in one" (see Eph. 1:10). Through Christ's sacrifice, Jew and Gentile are made one. They are both reconciled to God, and thereby they are "made both one" in order to create "one new man from the two, thus making

peace" (see Eph 2:13–18). This remarkable passage beautifully describes the ground and source of our unity, and the peace we should enjoy with each other.

We are Fellow Citizens Together

Through Christ, all of us—regardless of differences in race, colour, sex, education and background—"have access by one Spirit to the Father" (v. 18). As a result, we become bonded together as "fellow citizens" (v. 19), sharing the same calling, the same spiritual goals, the same spiritual priorities and the same glorious future.

Brothers and sisters in the church can be, and often are, closer than blood relatives—just as Christ promised (Mark 10:28-30). There is a mutual love and friendliness (see John 13:35) amongst the people of God which is remarkable and compelling. It is something which is noticeable and really stands out, as we often observe at the time of the Feast.

The Unity Chapter

Ephesians 4 could well be called the unity chapter of the New Testament. It says so much about this subject. Verses 25–32 give examples of contrasting behaviour. The right behaviour will lead to unity, whereas the opposite leads to division and disunity.

The role of the ministry (v. 11) is shown to be central in accomplishing the goal of unity. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith... to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (v. 12). This shows that the "perfection" (completeness, see Matt 5:48) of Christ's character is the goal of the church, and every member of it. As each of us becomes dedicated to "works of service", the Church will be edified, and unity will result as a by-product of this process. The Church is fundamentally about oneness: one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father (Eph 4:4–7). Because of this we should all endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). Notice that we keep the unity rather than generate it. Notice also this unity is spiritual rather than organisational. We are called to unity, so we should "have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called..." (verse 1).

NSE commentary: Again, please note that we are all still in progress to

reaching the fullness of Christ. We may do some things differently enough from other brethren that it is sometimes hard to feel unified—just as a married couple sometimes must go on working together even though they do not feel unified on some issues.

The fact that we are members of the same body makes us “members of one another” (Eph 4:25). All of this should enable us to submit ourselves to each other in the fear of God (Eph 5:21). The intimate and loving relationship between a married couple parallels the relationship which binds us together with Christ (Eph. 5:28–33, especially verse 32).

Some Final Thoughts

Look to what we have in common. We have seen that unity results from the things we have in common. Let us dwell on a positive appreciation of all we share in common with each other. We believe in Christ as our Saviour. We share a conviction of upholding God’s way of life.

We share an appreciation for our leaders. We respect them for their fruits of conversion, their vision and their expertise—from the original Apostles down to the present day. We share a common ideal of the work God has called us to fulfil.

NSE commentary: The above paragraph takes us away from unity in Christ and begins to base unity on human leaders. There is a very big difference in the original apostles and the leaders of the present day. According to the records we have, the Apostles did their work with great miracles, preached with great power, sometimes lacked basic physical comforts, and never once said that they could do more work if they just had more money. Many of our modern day leaders did not stand up for the doctrines in which they believe until they had a promise of a paycheck and benefits from another church organization. We could list many specific instances where brethren were treated unjustly by today’s church leaders. We believe that unity through Christ is much better than attempting to rally brethren around a human leader.

Pray for more of God’s Spirit. Unity is a by-product of the organic unity with God which flows from our new nature. So whenever we pray for unity we should remember to pray for more of God’s Spirit. Unity should be part and

parcel of what we already are and we need more of God’s Spirit to stir that up. We can “ask”, “seek” and “knock”, and God will grant that request (Luke 11:9–13). We should pray for a greater manifestation of God’s Spirit in each of us, and more of the gifts which flow from it (1Cor 12:4–11). God is the one who builds His Body, tempering (blending together) different gifts and talents to create a unified body without schism (vs. 19–27). We should all pray that God grants more of His Spirit to His Body whereby greater unity can prevail.

We can get back together! Is there ever a hope of getting back together and regaining lost unity? The answer is—yes. It is something we should all work and pray for. As each of us individually embodies Christ’s mind and priorities more fully, we should be able to heal the breaches and hurts which cause division, and work better together.

NSE commentary: This appears to be an appeal to create unity on the basis of human organizations and leaders. To most people, “getting back together” means regaining the “glory days” of the Worldwide Church of God. We must realize that the WCG was built around a man-made unity, not a Christ-like unity. People in the organization felt very unified. But what about the tens of thousands of members who were “put out” of that organization—many unjustly? What about the members of the Church of God Seventh Day, and other Sabbatarian groups who were treated like “pagans” by WCG members? Unity in the WCG was based completely on members complying with their ministers and ministers complying with headquarters. Men could (and some did) spend their lives in the organization vying for power and control—as long as they were clever enough not to offend anyone important, they remained in the organization. Members who found a scripture that disagreed with the organization’s doctrine, who decided they would follow the scripture instead, were often put out.

Live up to our high calling. I find it fascinating that despite all Paul did to encourage the church at Corinth to greater unity, thirty years later it was still apparently as bad as ever. In the non-canonical Book of Clement, the Bishop of Rome addresses the divisions of Corinth in an impassioned plea for unity. Apparently just a few hotheads were behaving in such

a way as to compromise the unity of a whole Church congregation.


Disunity amongst the people of God is not new. There is no real justification for it. Converted people should be able to work together in unity and resolve differences. We who aspire to greater unity and fruitfulness have a high calling to live up to. Perhaps the most important question we can all ask ourselves is—what can we do individually to build more unity in the body of Christ?

If we all have that attitude, the end result will be a unity to marvel at.

NSE commentary: We must all learn to accept our brothers’ different understanding of the scriptures—even when those difference are very big! We will give one example of how big these differences can be:

Earlier Mr. Meakin quoted from the NEB (New English Bible). This translation does not contain the words “ordain” or “ordination” at all. It would be impossible to establish a doctrine of “ordination” from this Bible. This writer believes that the NEB (and some other translations) are correct in this—there are no words in the original language of the Bible that have the modern day meaning of “ordain” or “ordination”. Our concept of these terms were inherited from the Catholic Church and her successors.

This writer does not believe that Church leadership should be established by “succession of ordination” but by brethren recognizing those people to whom the Eternal has granted a spiritual gift of leadership (see article in this issue: How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?). This is a radical belief to many. But if the church organizations dismiss the idea as evil without studying it—or if they threaten to punish their members for attending a service without ordained ministers, we cannot have unity.

But if the church organizations can accept all of those who are seeking the Eternal outside the traditional ordained ministry, then we can still have unity! These issues cannot be studied instantly. We need to accept each other while we both continue to study the subject. I still can and do fellowship with brethren in church organizations. When I attend their services, I cooperate with their ministry and policies. The church organizations can learn to cooperate in like fashion. It is all part of unity! 

Letters & Responses

We print a representative sampling of our mail—both positive and negative. Writers should specify how much of their name and address they would like us to print.

Feast Flags Offer

LETTER: July 14, 1998
Servants' News,

I'm sending you a copy of my article that was published in *The Journal*. Our congregation in Tupelo, Mississippi feels strongly that there are brethren in all "organizations" of God's churches. That's why this green flag (or wind tunnel) can be used by all. Down South during football season many people have these flags or wind tunnels that they place on their car windows. These flags identify which team they represent. As they're driving down the roads these flags are just waving away!

These flags that we propose to sell will cost close to \$12 with the shipping and handling. They can be removed from the window when brethren arrive at their Feast site. This alleviates the problem we had in the past years about people hunting us to rob us, or whatever. They'll be the old Feast color green with black lettering and have either FT or Feast on it, thus identifying God's people going to the Feast. These flags are on a plastic pole that are placed on the window and held there when the window is rolled up. Send orders and money to: United Church of God, PO Box 612, Fulton, MS 38843.

—Joann Simmons, Mississippi

RESPONSE: Thanks for letting our readers know. It has been our experience that some people really like these kinds of things and others do not. Anyone who wants one can contact you directly.

—NSE

Please Provide Alternatives

LETTER: July 20, 1998

I looked in vain for some constructive criticism in Mr. McCaulley's article. None of my fellow congregants appear to view themselves as members of a congregation ruled by a corporation.

I cannot even imagine what chaos would erupt if each one individually were to be asked to vote on salaries, hiring of per-

sonnel, strategic projects, etc.

Mr. McCaulley is missing the injunction in I Cor 14:26, by offering no specific advice...alternatives...to the situation and strategy he so violently opposes. Does he no longer recognize Mr. McCullough as a fellow servant, that he (Mr. McCaulley) feels free to "beat" him? (Luke 12:45)

COG papers these days are full of scholarly advice to become "yielded to God" by people who can offer no "fool-proof" instructions, and by people who know what is wrong with all congregations but their own, and sometimes, **especially** their own!

We need to read something edifying, up-beat and encouraging, if there is any such thing to be found, and if there isn't, complaining and carping and fault-finding will do little to improve it.

There is a lot of exhortation via audio tape available, too, to be "yielded to God". Presumably the writer/publisher/speaker have achieved that admirable state. We need to be let in on the secret.

Please! If you have never personally done any of the things Mr. McCullough has been attempting to do: Get off his back! If you have had the experience, offer your experience and expertise.

I believe it's still true that God looks on the heart! It seems none has considered looking on Mr. McCullough's heart recently. Could it be it's still in the right place?

P.S. As to Mr. McCullough behaving arrogantly, the twelve did not leave the more important work to serve tables. Were they exalting themselves? (Acts 6:2)

Is it certain Mr McCullough is being craven, or is he merely obeying the instructions in James 3 regarding improper use of the tongue? Does Mr. McCaulley have all this insight partly from hind sight? Does Mr. McCaulley's "good will" include loyalty or respect? I may have to repent of the attitude I'm exhibiting now. If it develops I'm wrong, I'll certainly "eat crow".

—Beth Linehan, Wisconsin

RESPONSE: We received a number of letters and phone calls about Tim McCaulley's article. He received some also. Some claimed to agree completely with the article, others completely disagreed. At least one asked to stop receiving *Servants' News* because of it. We agree with you that it offers little constructive criticism. We published it because we felt McCaulley was speaking very sincerely about very real problems. Many months ago, he was a very staunch supporter of UCG-IA. But after seeing many setbacks, and after much per-

sonal Bible study, he began to realize that the UCG-IA may not be the group that the Eternal will use to do His major work in the future. Such realizations come hard.

If McCaulley had been an isolated case, we would not have published his article. But we have heard similar expressions of frustration from **many others** within UCG. We know of other UCG-IA congregations that are largely in agreement-it seems that their home office tries to tell them what to do, cancels their local evangelism programs, and does little of service to the congregation. Every local congregation would like Christ to guide them. Are they letting Him guide them if they feel bound to follow a home office that they see as ineffective?

There is no doubt that McCaulley, McCullough, myself, and many others need to be closer to Christ so that we can be kinder in dealing with others, and be more constructive in our approach. It is not our place to "judge another man's servant". On the other hand, if we waited until we were perfect to speak up, we would never say anything at all! You can rest assured that we receive many articles much **more negative** than McCaulley's.

I personally believe that the Eternal allowed the breakup of the WCG and now many of its splinter groups because He wants people who are looking directly to Him, not to an ordination or corporation. We pray that He will guide each person through the difficult times ahead and help each to understand the particular circumstances that are happening to them.

Tim McCaulley may be contacted at PO Box 8441, Jacksonville, FL 32239-0441; 904-743-9811.

—NSE

Thanks and Praise for Miracle

LETTER: July 13, 1998
Dear Norm,

I just have to share with you a miracle that happened in our UCG-IA Oshkosh, Wisconsin, church.

While on a bike trip with members of the Church, Dave Schneiderhan had a flat tire and was thrown from his bike and injured his shoulder. He was taken to the emergency hospital to ensure there were no broken bones. After taking X-rays, they detected a growth in his shoulder and had him return twice during the week for more X-rays, two CT scans, and a bone scan. He was told there was a tumor in his shoulder that looked as if it had eaten part of the bone. Scary stuff, eh? They wanted to do a biopsy immediately. Dave decided he want-

ed a second opinion, so he went to a different hospital that had brand new equipment. He had another battery of doctors and duplication tests. The doctors at this hospital concurred that he had a growth and would need surgery. It didn't look good.

We went to visit the Schneiderhans a week after the accident. They told us they were going to go to Mayo Clinic. Dave had been anointed and said he could accept having an operation, but he feared cancer. He and his wife had faith and we assured them God could make that tumor physically disappear. We were all praying for them when they left to go to Mayo. They brought their X-rays with them, but the doctor, of course, decided they needed new X-rays and tests. You're right—no more tumor! Dave inquired of the doctors, "What about the X-rays that show a tumor? You can point to it." The doctors had no comment other than "The X-rays look grainy."

There's no question in our mind. We know who to thank for this miracle. God is not slack in His promises.

—Ken Omick, Wisconsin

RESPONSE: Thank you for sharing your story. This is what I like to refer to as a "quiet miracle". You are convinced it is a miracle, but the doctors who witnessed it are not asking to join your fellowship or write a paper on it for their medical journal. They are willing to attribute it to poor x-rays, and go on about their business. It is a blessing that the Eternal provides these miracles for those who trust Him. Someday, He may provide more "attention-getting" miracles, such as the man healed in Acts 3:6 about which even the enemies of the church said: "For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:16).

Comments on Real Heresies

LETTER: July 16, 1998

Servants' News,

Enclosed is a little to help pay for the service you do in producing *Servants' News*. I once thought of discontinuing it as I found little agreement but I've found that some of what I thought wasn't based on as much fact as I thought. So, now I find I'm in more agreement with what you write.

Besides you and *The Journal* are both valuable sources of information and understanding of what is occurring in the scattered church of God so I hope you can continue to produce it.

I reference to your response on page 18 of June 98 issue under Real Heresies.

July 1998

You say some find errors in the Bible. There are errors in the Bible—there are errors in translation and most important errors in our understanding of the meaning of the Bible. But there are no errors in the Bible as it was originally written as it is the inspired word of God. To me it seems proof that anyone who claims the Bible is not all the inspired word of God is to deny God and therefore not a follower of Him.

After all the Bible does say that no one can call Jesus the Lord except by the Spirit, (1 Cor 12:3) and the same verse basically says that to say Jesus, and therefore His word is in error, is not of God. So, this should make it easy to see where these people are coming from.

—Washington

RESPONSE: When speaking of "Bible error", we need to realize that there are three types of errors that people talk about:

1) **Translation errors**—the English Bible does not say the same things as the original Hebrew or Greek.

2) **Copying errors**—alterations made during the process of copying the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. These could be intentional or accidental.

3) **Errors in the original writing.** When there is no reason to think errors #1 and #2 affect a passage, then we have to ask, "Is the original writing a mistake?"

Before we say the "Word of God" cannot possibly have a mistake, we need to realize that the original writings of the Bible itself fall into several categories:

a) **Direct quotations of the Eternal or Christ.** If people reject these words, they indeed are rejecting the Eternal.

b) **History of what people said and did.** We have the words of righteous men, evil men and even the words of Satan in the Bible. Satan lied to Eve, and the Bible clearly declares Satan a liar. But there are cases when men said or did things upon which the Bible does not give the Eternal's opinion. For example, was Jethro's advice to Moses to choose rulers of 1000s, 100s, 50s and 10s good or bad? (Ex 18.) Was it later replaced by other types of government? (Num 11:16-17, Deut 16:18-20.) Were Jethro's commands "the Word of God" or could they be error?

c) **Clear statements of opinion.** There are a few places in the Scriptures that are clearly labeled opinion. One example is Paul's instruction to avoid marriage (1Cor 7:25-35). Paul gave this instruction believing that Christ would return soon. Obviously, if it was followed throughout history, believers would never have any children. But Paul also says

those who do marry "have not sinned". It is possible that these instructions are the Eternal's will, but only for a specific time and place.

We cannot make a thorough study of Bible "contradictions" and "errors" here, but the above points should help us realize that the Bible is a complex book with many writers and speakers. We **cannot** rashly say "it is 100% inspired Word of God". It is the Word that the Eternal wants us to have. It contains His truth for us to learn, mistakes for us to avoid, and uncertain parts for us to study and understand.

—NSE

Are We Asleep?

LETTER: July 10 1998

Hello Norm and Servants' News Staff, Thank you for your service of providing thought provoking and insightful information. Please continue and you don't need to change a thing.

God has led you to provide this service. Now we have a choice to read or not. God has shaken and He is moving. Are we, those who have come out of hierarchical bondage, still awake or are we being lulled to sleep again? I think, if one does read, he or she will not want to go to sleep again.

Thanks again and God bless your efforts.

—Marcia Chambers, Texas

RESPONSE: It seems some people leave one group, only to go join another. Others stray down some narrow doctrinal path. But overall, it is a wonderful time to be out of the church organizations. There are many places one may attend Sabbath services and go to the Feast. This was not so 10 to 20 years ago.

—NSE

1939 Govt Article by HWA

LETTER: June 10, 1998

Dear Mr. Edwards

I read with much interest the reprinted article from the Feb 1939 Good News about Mr. Armstrong's understanding of the governance of the Church. Do you also have an article by him that shows **when** and **why** he changed his mind? As we well know, the latter years of his life he felt God's government for the Church was a radically different idea than that he proposed in the above mentioned article. Thanks for any help you can share to shed some light on this divisive subject.

—Regina Wilson, Ohio

RESPONSE: When Herbert Armstrong moved his base of operations to Pasadena

in the 1940's, he had trouble keeping the loyalty of the brethren that he left behind in the Pacific Northwest. Some of the leaders of the congregations there broke away from Armstrong for a variety of reasons—partly good and partly bad. But if a “leaving leader” claimed he was being led by the Holy Spirit, and his congregation believed him, there was little Armstrong could do to keep the money from that congregation coming to Pasadena. At some time, Armstrong wrote that he was “confused” on the subject of “church government.” In the early 1950's, Herman Hoeh and Rod Meredith began to write articles on hierarchical government. Armstrong accepted these articles and gradually began to preach it more and more throughout the 50's. Hierarchical government became the way of life in the WCG in the 60's, and by the 70's Armstrong preached that the message of the Bible was “government”.

Keep Sacred Names and New Moons

LETTER: July 10, 1998

Dear Norman, Tim, Jeanice, Marleen, Missi, Lee, Jon, Ann, George, and Pam,

My...with ten people you would think someone would have time to study major keys of scripture. Yahweh is his name. Yahshua is his son. And the New Moon in Jerusalem which is Yahweh's headquarters sets the Feasts. Quite simple.

My husband and I did not need any written material. Although our computer made it faster for us to weed out and find truth. Anyone can do it. It takes discernment...an exercise people do not do. There are many excuses. The most frequent is “time”. Oh well...we believe if you and your group feel led to teach or convey your beliefs to others then you should know what you teach. You and your group are only adding confusion to these truth seekers and maybe delay their growth. Remember...you are held accountable.

I have been reading *Servants' News* for quite some time and for the longest time you guys have not understood why the names are important and the New Moon in Jerusalem. Lack of discernment and misuse of time are your stumblingblocks. As brethren, it is my duty to write. I have to get this off my shoulders. Now you are totally responsible for all your actions, because you have been told. Now obedience to Yahweh is at hand and is up to all of you. The reader of this letter is responsible to getting this to everyone in the group and is held accountable.

—Rina Burch, Georgia

RESPONSE: There are actually only three people who regularly work on *Servants' News*: Norman & Marleen Edwards and Pam Dewey. The others all have some kind of full-time work, and serve primarily by proof-reading and editing articles just before they go to press. The only letters they see are the ones printed here.

We realize that teachers are accountable for what they teach. That is why we do not teach doctrines that we cannot prove to our satisfaction. We are glad that you spend so much time studying the Bible. But we are responsible for what we know, not for what you know. I cannot say to Christ in the judgement, “I taught these doctrines because Rina Burch warned me that I had to teach them.” If you present some truth to me that I can biblically or historically verify, then I am responsible for it. But your letter did not contain one scripture. We receive hundreds of letters warning us to teach this or that doctrine. I cannot study them all, or even read them all. I pray for the Eternal to show me what is most important to study, and I study those subjects with the time I have.

—NSE

Sacred Names Feasts

LETTER: July 10, 1998

Servants' News,

Why don't you compile a list of the people that choose to use the names that we may contact each other and basically “go on with things?”

Also, how do I get a copy of LRCOG people that we may visit? Also Feast sites of Name users? Your help is appreciated. Also, do you accept donations?

—Rina Burch, Georgia

RESPONSE: We have received papers giving over a dozen different versions of the Father and Son's names. Some sacred names groups do not believe you have the Holy Spirit unless you are in their group. A few “names” groups are paramilitary or racist. Some people believe the use of the Names is necessary for salvation, others do not. It would be too difficult for us to keep track of all of the “sacred name” individuals and groups—we do not know which of our subscribers use the Names and which do not. Also, we do not know which of the above type of groups you would find acceptable to fellowship with.

There is a list of three Sacred Name Feast sites in this issue—they will be able to tell you about many other Sacred Name believers. We will send you a copy of the

Living Room Church of God directory. Yes, we gratefully accept donations.

—NSE

Share What You Know

LETTER: July 9, 1998

I've been able to get lots of materials into the prison through the chaplain. He's been thankful and most helpful. There has been one thing on my mind lately. How are we to be joyful? I'm afraid that where we attend services we are too orderly. I'm not judging, please don't misunderstand. I'm thirsty for the whole word of God.

Lately, all our sermons seem to be on prophecy. I don't claim to understand everything about prophecy, but I do feel I know what to watch for. When a person is fairly new, he/she needs living lessons. I've read most all the literature I've received and the daily living lessons are good. I'd just like to hear them from our teacher. Why do most groups focus on just one subject?

Why do some of the groups focus on the old Worldwide? Don't they realize those people had the truth and they have been begged for many years to return? Why aren't they looking for that one lost sheep that had never heard the true gospel? I'd never suggest completely abandoning the members of the old Worldwide. Just not putting all their efforts into beating a dead horse.

Guess what I found out on my own? Sabbath-keepers are not the strange ones or weird ones. It's so easy to talk to people. We are set apart and blessed. I refuse to believe anymore that other people are misled or miseducated. They always respond so positively. I never push but I am very honest. They'll come back with statements like I didn't know or I'd like to read that etc...

I had wrestled with the problem if individuals were supposed to be witnesses or not. If we're silent and strange, how could that possibly reflect what Christ expects us to do? Let's face the truth. In this day and age with all the evils to tempt people in this world. Money, power, sex, crooked government. How could a few quite good people reach anyone? I'm sure no one would be impressed enough to seek God or not even open their Bible by watching my living example. In their eyes all the would see would be a poor clean hard working family. They would be wondering where are the benefits? All they could possibly see were the hardships. If I didn't offer them something, a word or a booklet or a tape, how could they ever see past my being just a

poor hard working person? For the real rewards. I believe God calls who He will. But He also accepts those who ask, repent and are baptized.

Didn't Jesus leave us with a work to do? Or just the leaders of organizations?

Not everyone will accept the true gospel. They aren't supposed to. Rest assured none will if they aren't reached by other people. God will put His Holy Spirit to work on His that truly want the truth.

I'm sorry I write so poorly. I'd love to have some of these questions answered. I'd like to know if anyone else has ever felt like I do. I'd welcome their comments.

—SM, Mississippi

RESPONSE: You are right. Church groups tend to focus on one or a few subjects—usually getting and keeping members, not helping them to grow. Christ told His followers that they were to be “lights”, so others could see. When the church at Jerusalem was scattered, they went everywhere preaching the Gospel (Acts 8:1,2) and they were effective (Acts 11:19). The government article at the end of this *Servants' News* covers the scriptures showing that each member should develop the spiritual gifts that Christ gives them.

—NSE

UCG-UK Comments

LETTER: July 3, 1998

Servants' News,

The work done by United's people in Britain needs to move forward. Most people realize that in most countries of the world including Britain, there is limited scope for a large centralized work.

Most brethren in UCG here (those who have not been “stolen” unawares by church of “Hulme”) want to be involved in a local work within United.

United's part in the Gospel in Britain has been stopped in the last 3 years by David Hulme and “his” ministers pretending they were behind a council government when all the time they were planning to turn the council into a “one man at the top government” even against consensus.

These underground workers wouldn't let the Gospel get out here except by a centralized way, which has never been allowed in Britain the way they wanted it. They were just working their way to a D. Hulme takeover.

Some ministers in Britain had planned this take-over as long as 3 years ago, and maybe in USA as well. Mr. Hulme failed to achieve this when President, then after he was removed, they had no option but to criticize the council, keep council literature

away from members in Britain and say how poorly D. Hulme was treated.

Now is the time to pray, get active, pray, get involved, and have faith in God, and United's people to do our share in getting the Gospel out to Britain and the world with the structure of United to help us and join us to do it.

—David Young, Scotland

RESPONSE: We agree with your zeal to get busy and help share in getting the Gospel out. Only the Eternal and David Hulme really know how much Hulme tried to cooperate with the council and how much he tried to take over the council. I have seen others work for many years in an effort to take over a big corporation. The Eternal will not be fooled.

As far as you are concerned, there is very little to be concerned about. The Eternal will do His work through those whom He chooses in spite of corporations. See government paper at end of this issue.

—NSE

Voting and Civil Action

LETTER: April 20, 1998

Dear Norm and Marleen,

I trust you are well? I wrote this letter to the editor (regarding school children recently shooting classmates in Jonesboro, Arkansas), hoping it would plant a seed in many minds. Several friends have passed it on to parents with young children.

But it raises a question. How do we go about cleaning up movies and videos? Some teach that we are not to vote or to make an effort to clean up the world. What are your thoughts on this? Have you written an article on voting?

I somehow believe God will hold us responsible if we sit back and do nothing when we could act.

Partial birth abortion is another atrocity about which, it seems, **we can't look the other way and just wait until Christ comes to change things.** If we were in the room and saw a doctor doing it, how would we act? Do nothing? I doubt it. Yet, we know it is being done down the street and on many streets of America.

Last week, I gave this article to a visitor at church from Jonesboro. I told him that the nation would likely listen to some of the Jonesboro parents more than anyone, if they would plead this cause.

Your thoughts, please?

—Lois Gordon, Arkansas

RESPONSE: Your questions are very good. The WCG usually taught people not to get involved in secular government. The

Bible does not teach that world peace will come through secular governments, but it does not forbid involvement in them. On the other hand, it does not command involvement in them. There are many things that men try to solve through government that should be solved another way. This can be a complicated issue and we would like to cover it in a future article.

—NSE

Full Moon or Last Crescent?

LETTER: May 14, 1998

Dear Mr. Edwards,

Would you please explain, Psalms 81:3.

Does not the New King James translation imply that we are to observe the Feast of trumpets (the only feast day that falls on the first day of the Hebrew month) on the “full moon” phase of the Moon cycle?

We in the Church of God have been observing this Holy day (Feast of Trumpets) at the last crescent of the moon phase called the, “new moon.” My question is; Which is Right?

We truly must obey God! Please, if possible, could you clarify this scripture for me from a biblical standpoint. Thank you.

—John Strouth, North Carolina

RESPONSE: We have explained this scripture in previous answers to letters. In general, the Hebrew does not necessarily mean that the full moon is the new moon. There is fairly good historical evidence that Jesus kept the Feasts by a first crescent calendar. Many people sincerely consider the Scriptures and come up with different calendars. I do not believe that eternal salvation or reward will be largely based on one's calendrical ability. I think justice, mercy, and faith are much more important. We are sending you our article, Biblical Calendar Basics, which covers Psalm 81:3.

—NSE

Why Doctrinal Reversals?

LETTER: July 12, 1998

In reference to the recent changes made by some to meeting on Sunday instead of the Sabbath.

A primary question: How do the deceivers make such cancerous inroads on the faith and beliefs of Christians? To what state of conditions had people regressed to be so vulnerable to such an overt attack? Were their beliefs based on false premises and half truths? Were they Christians in word only—pseudo Christians?

Possible Conclusions:

1) The so called shepherds did not ground the people in faith and trust of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Proverb 1:7, Ecc.12:13, John 14:1, II Tim. 1:13-14. Wisdom must begin here. The people were constantly brow beat into submission to the organization and its leadership. They were constantly told to "keep the law" (men's doctrines, not the law of love), submit, obey, pay and pray, so that they may attain acceptance into the good graces of the leadership and have any opportunity to go to the place of safety.

2) False teachers caused some people to forget the true name of their God (Jer 23:27). Part of His true name is Faithful, Trustworthy, True, Loving kindness, Merciful, Patient, Kind, Gentle, Giver, Savior, Teacher, Guide, Helper, Provider, and Forgiving. But, they told the people that God's name is hard, mean, uncaring, harsh, impatient, quick to destroy, selfish, unloving, hater, proud and unforgiving. An individual once said, "God called you to spend you not to save you."

3) Some people's beliefs were built on sand; doctrines of men—empty words that lead to death spiritually. They should have been founded upon sound healthy words, that give spiritual life. The words of our Lord, Jesus Christ. They accepted men's words as truth, instead of reading the word of truth to find God's will, and then act upon it. They never questioned "authority", although commanded to do so by Jesus and the Apostles many times. Part of Jesus' commandment "see that no one misleads you" (Mark 13:5); "—be on your guard" (v 9); "Take heed, keep on the alert" (v 33); "Do not let Me find you asleep (spiritually)" (v 36); "be on the alert" (v 37).

4) Some were taught to worship false gods!

- A man—the leader of the organization.
- An organization—a corporate system.
- A day, instead of the Creator of that day.
- A distorted picture of their God and Savior.
- The incorrect path to salvation.

—John Akin

RESPONSE: I agree with most of what you say. During most of the Worldwide Church of God history, a person could attend for years and know almost nothing about the Bible, and no one would probably ever know or care. As long as they attended services and activities, paid their tithes, and did not cause any trouble, they were considered "good members". A person who wore old clothes, had a messy house, had noisy children or questioned a headquarters teaching was likely to get prompt attention from the local minister. But if someone couldn't name the first five

books of the Old or New Testament, who would care? One exception was men who aspired to be ordained—most realized that Bible knowledge would be important for that (though probably not as important as corporate loyalty). The other exception was Spokesmen's Clubs, where men sometimes had to expound the Bible and answer false teachings. But even in these clubs, much of the emphasis was on looking and acting right—there was never an organized program to make sure that every man could explain every fundamental doctrine by using only his Bible and a concordance.

The situation was much worse for women. Bible knowledge rarely ever was a factor in determining who would become a "deaconess". There was no equivalent of Spokesmen's Clubs for women. Indeed, a woman could attend her entire life in the WCG, never know anything about the Bible, and no one would ever know. This writer has personally heard stories of men who were "high" in Church of God organizations who admitted that their wives "never read the Bible at all". Yet, how many men left the job of religious instruction for their children primarily in the hands of their wives?

—NSE

Year 2000, Numerology Nonsense

LETTER: July 9, 1998
I found this article in the July 7 *USA Today*:

Is Year 2000 Bug a Date Problem or a Math Problem?

Although his solution doesn't work on every system menaced by the "Year 2000 problem" (in which software coded with 2-digit dates in the year fields will cause incorrect calculations when the 20th century yields to the new one), entrepreneur Allen Burgess had a breakthrough insight: "I woke up in the middle of the night and had the idea. It's not a date problem. It's a math problem. We had to find and fix the math." So Waltham, Massachusetts company Data Integrity developed a Y2K tool (called the Millennium Solution) that is being used by Citibank, Credit Suisse, First Boston, NationsBank, and the U.S. Interior Department. One part of the Millennium Solution searches for math in a software program; if a two-digit date is found to be part of the math calculation, the Millennium Solution uses a trick of addition to get the calculation to work correctly. For example, to calculate age in 01 (i.e., 2001) of a person born in 67 (i.e.,

1967): 01 - 67 = minus 66. Add 50. Add 50 again. Correct answer: 34 years old.

—End of Article—

Some big hitters buy this notion, which seems a little too simple. It could work, though your experience gives you a better vantage point to evaluate that.

By the way, I thought the numerology piece in the latest SN would have been hilarious if people didn't actually believe that stuff. Here's something addressing a topic cut from the same bolt of rags as numerology:

<http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/dilugim/moby.html>

It shows how various assassinations were predicted using the Bible Code techniques on Melville's "Moby Dick."

—David Ruppert, Michigan

RESPONSE: There are a number of companies with various computer programs that will help with the year 2000 problem. Allen Burgess' idea will certainly solve some problems, but cannot be considered a breakthrough. The difficulty is that there are so many programming languages and hardware that one solution will not fit everything. For example, some types of date arithmetic simply do not accept negative values—they will either give a false positive value or "crash" (stop working) if they are given a problem that results in a negative value. Also, some human must check all of the "fix-ups" made by Burgess' program to be sure that it is really dates that it is fixing. What would happen if his program accidentally "fixed" another program that was calculating temperatures—which sometimes are supposed to be negative?

Finally, this is only one part of date problems. Supposing a computer program was checking to see if people were at least 18 years of age. It might start with the current year (say 01—standing for 2001), then subtract 18 to calculate a "reference year" Burgess' fix-up program might change the answer to 83 (correct). Then the computer goes about comparing birth years of people to see if they are less than this reference year, which would make them older than 18. Somebody born in 73 (28 years old) is accepted, because 73 is less than or equal to 83. Somebody born in 91 (10 years old) is not accepted because 91 is greater than 83. However, somebody born in 00 (17 years old) is accepted because 00 is less than 83, but that is not what the program was supposed to do. Burgess' fix-up has failed in this case. As the current year becomes later and later, this program will fail for more and more age groups.

Burgess' fix-up does nothing to help locate imbedded computer chips or help determine what software might be defective. The only way to get out of year 2000 problems is to change every important program and then test it. Automated "computer tools" can help, but blindly trusting them to fix everything will certainly guarantee that some problems will remain.

The numerology site looks interesting. I hope to look at it sometime.

—NSE

Various Prophetic Understandings

LETTER:

July 5, 1998

Editor—*Servant's News*

Sir,

If recent letters to the editor are any indication, at least some of your readers are beginning to come around. I would like to follow up on some recent comments in context with the identity of the woman depicted in the 12th chapter of Revelation.

If we are to allow the Scriptures to interpret themselves then Isaiah identifies her as (spiritual) Zion, with the Kingdom's First Fruits shown issuing forth from her womb in composite birth at the last (seventh) Trumpet. (compare Revelation 11:15 through 12:1-5 with Isaiah 66:7-9)

Who is end time Zion, and more importantly, where does she abide today? Certainly not with Judah! (see Matthew 21:43) The Scriptures indicate she resides with Joseph! (compare Genesis 37:9 with Revelation 12:1)

Notice the marked contrast between the spiritual works of end time Zion and the (parallel) physical works of Judah. (compare Joel 2:32 with Joel 3:1) Physical Jerusalem and the (coming) physical Temple therein are **not** identical with spiritual Jerusalem and the (coming) "remnant" Temple work therein.

Since Joseph is destined to predominate over his brother nations (stars) in establishment of the coming millennial Kingdom and spiritual Zion is destined to abide with Joseph, it follows that the nations of Ephraim and Manasseh must abide as one peoples, or more specifically as a "vast multitude" in the midst of Earth.

In accordance with Jacob's blessing (Genesis 48) Ephraim was destined to become **greater** than his brother, as a company of nation states. The United States of America fulfills that requirement as a company of 50 nation states. By way of contrast, Manasseh (Canada) abides to the north and is indeed the lesser nation.

Zion's crown of 12 stars represent a coming "United Federation of Israel", who

are destined to rule over end time Zion, with Joseph dominating as host nation. (by way of example, compare this coming prophetic union with the present United Nations based in New York)

When will these events begin to unfold? Zechariah reveals the (former) spiritual works of Israel, whose foundations were set forth by our forefathers, will be called into remembrance by the Lord of Hosts about the time the second horseman of the apocalypse concludes his ride. (compare Zechariah 1:7-12 with Revelation 6:3-4) Contrary to popular belief, the four horsemen are a tightly knit and closely related series of events which are shortly destined to come to pass.

At that time, the Lord of Hosts will commission a "measure" (of understanding) concerning the depth and scope of spiritual Jerusalem in preparation for the spiritual works that are ultimately destined to conclude with an establishment of the coming millennial Kingdom. (Zechariah 2:1-6)

After this coming preliminary "measure", He will then begin to call spiritual Zion forth in Exodus from present day civilization (namely out of spiritual Babylon) in preparation for the works that will follow. (Zechariah 2:7-13)

By way of contrast, compare these Scriptures with the distorted parallel perspectives formerly taught by Armstrong, and currently subscribed to by many splinter groups.

Of a truth it is said the most dangerous lie is one which most nearly approximates the truth.

Sincerely,

—Joseph L. Coman
coman@ionet.net

Thank you for your letter. You have a different view of prophecy than Herbert Armstrong's view. We see nothing wrong with that, especially since Armstrong often made specific predictions that did not come to pass as he said it did. However, your first paragraph sounds as if coming to understand prophecy is the same as coming to agree with you. You give some scriptures for some of your points, but give no proof for the very dogmatic statement "the four horsemen are a tightly knit and closely related series of events which are shortly destined to come to pass".

We would like to know what authority you believe you have for your prophetic understanding. Have you had a miraculous revelation from the Eternal? Do you believe He has just specifically given you understanding? Or do you believe that there is only one possible correct understanding of the scripture? And if so, how

many other people do you know who have come to your exact understanding completely on their own?

We are not against studying prophecy at all. However, we are now a little more careful before we accept someone's understanding. An understanding from the Eternal will hold up to questioning and will not have to be continually modified to fit the latest world news.

—NSE

[Note to SN readers: Coman and I exchanged several more e-mail messages after this where Coman explained why he believes his personal unique understanding of prophecy is correct. I challenged one (though I could have challenged more) point of his prophetic teaching: the idea that there are two groups of people: the "elect" (Matt 24:31 & other places) and the "very elect" (Matt 24:24). I showed how the term "very elect" is a misleading translation of the Greek, and how nearly every other translation simply says "even the elect". First Coman claimed my analysis of the verse was wrong, but later indicated that his understanding was correct, even if this verse did not confirm it. Eventually, he sent me a message saying that he would not respond to any more of my e-mails.

I leave this question to our readers to think about. Suppose you had spent hundreds of hours studying prophecy, felt you had a great understanding of it, and were beginning to teach it to others. If someone were able to point out one definite mistake in your understanding, would you want to hear more from that person, or would you drive them away? Another way to ask the same question: What is more important, to make your understanding as correct as possible, or to go on thinking that you never make a mistake?

One other thought to ponder: It is fairly easy to apply rigorous standards of biblical proof to a prophecy teacher whom we know little about. It is much more difficult to apply those standards to one whom we have trusted in and/or supported for many years.

—NSE]

Work Out Your Own Salvation

LETTER:

June 6, 1998

Mr. Edwards:

I've never written before but I do want to thank you for sending me your Vol.4 N0 3 edition. The title "UCGIA Letter to Big Sandy Shows True Colors" really hit home.

My wife and I were in the audience at the auditorium in Pasadena for Atonement in '79. Before services began, Tkach Sr.

continued from previous page

with Blackwell at his side, came on stage to announce, to our shock & surprise, the disfellowshipment of Fred Coulter. During his diatribe, he referred to Fred Coulter in all but filthy, language. At that moment, we realized the path that WWCG was taking.

We had to ask: "Is this the type of treatment that's afforded a true minister of God"? It was this same "showmanship" that has led me to turn down a deaconship in WWCG and our leaving the church.

It is ironic that your title "UCGIA Letter to Big Sandy Shows True Colors" is the same "opening" that Tkach Sr. used to open his diatribe against Fred Coulter.

You are probably asking "What does this article have to do with the disfellowshipment of Fred Coulter?" It is this: The same people that were in power in WCG, at the time of this incident, are the same people that now are in the hierarchy of UCGIA. Those of you that are still clinging to United Church of God-AIA, ask yourselves "Where is the loyalty, the unity and trust that a person expects from his/her church hierarchy?"

Those of you that have read this far, remember Philippians 2:12 which reads: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" and think on this scripture. Does it apply to you?

—DD, AZ

RESPONSE: You have brought up many good points. The WCG usually ignored or maligned every minister whom they put out—good or bad. They would never read the departing minister's resignation letter, give his phone or address, or make any other effort that would allow the departing minister to tell his side of the story. Some ministers did leave simply seeking a following after themselves. Others, such as Fred Coulter, had very legitimate complaints against the WCG. While I do not agree with everything he teaches, Fred Coulter certainly has provided a much deeper level of study than was typically available in the WCG. He also provided a place to fellowship for people who were put out of the WCG.

We felt the UCG-IA's approach to the brethren was wrong, so we explained exactly why—in the hope that they will change it. However, we did print their entire letter in order to make sure that their side of the story is available to our readers. It is not our purpose to judge anyone; Christ will do that. But for now, brethren must make decisions about which "church leaders" and congregations they will fellowship with and serve.

—NSE 

"Narrow Gate" from page 1

Other Scriptures similarly condemn the practice of false religion (Lev 18:3; 20:23; Jer 10:2; Ezk 20:32). But does the fact that few people believe what you believe mean that you have the truth? **Is something more likely to be true just because few people believe it?** Do you feel like you have the truth because you are a member of a group with maybe only a few thousand, few hundred or maybe even just a few people? **Christ said that His way was narrow, but He did not say that every narrow way was His!** *Servants' News* has been in contact with about a hundred individuals who have some unique religious teaching that they feel is vitally important. Of course, they are all different. **Not every narrow gate leads to life.**

Many of the people who have their own brand of teaching have identified some particular thing as "Pagan" in our society and preach that we must avoid it completely in our lives. However, we believe these people fail to distinguish the difference between removing false things from our worship, and removing things based on false religion from our secular society. The scriptures do not command us to remove paganism from every word, practice, and design that we encounter in our daily lives. If we find that the name of the street or city where we live is named after a pagan deity, are we required to move? If someone tells you that the picture of a cow on your milk bottle is a design used in a pagan temple, are you required to stop drinking it? Some people would say "yes" to both of these questions. But what did Paul say about eating meat that had actually been offered to idols?

Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, **we know that an idol is nothing** in the world, and that there is no other God but one (1Cor 8:4).

We received the following article, written in April of 1997. The author meant well, and wanted to encourage everyone to live as righteous of a life as possible. Please read the following article, and we will comment upon it:

"Week End"

In our time near the end of the twentieth century (1997), a relatively old English dictionary would be one from near the beginning of the century. One such dictionary is

the Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language published in 1912 by the G. & C. Merriam Company in Springfield, Massachusetts. In that dictionary, the word that we are considering, "weekend", is shown as a hyphenated word and is defined as follows.

week'-end', n. The end of the week; specif., though loosely used, the period observed commonly as a holiday, from Saturday noon or Friday night to Monday; as to visit a friend for a week-end; also, a house party during week-end.

This word is also shown in the Second Edition, Unabridged, of the Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language published in 1935 by G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, and has the same meaning but is shown without the hyphen. In the Tenth Edition of the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, published in 1993 by Merriam-Webster, Inc., of Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A., the entry is, in part, as follows.

1week-end n (1638) : the end of the week;. Specif : the period between the close of one working or business or school week and the beginning of the next.

The date shown, 1638, is the earliest date that the editors could determine that the word appeared in print in English. Consequently, the word "weekend" has been in print for about 360 years. And likely, "week-end" was in conversational use several years before appearing on a printed page. Consequently, "weekend" and its meaning has been a part of our English-speaking culture for generations and has influenced many of our forefathers who spoke the English language and many of us who now speak the English language.

The word "weekend", as defined in preceding paragraphs, includes all or a large part of two days, the Seventh Day and the First Day.

The Seventh Day of the week starts at the setting of the sun at the end of the Sixth Day and ends at the next setting of the sun, just before the start of the First Day of the next week. The 24-hour period of time commonly referred to as Saturday partially coincides with the Seventh Day of the week.

The First Day of the week starts at the setting of the sun at the end of the Seventh Day of the preceding week, and ends at the time the sun next sets, just before the start of the Second Day of that week.

Since the word "weekend" includes the word "end" many people think that the last of the two days in the "weekend" is the last day

of the week. This is a reasonable outcome since "end", in the chronological sense, has the following meaning:

1end n 2 a: cessation of a course of action, pursuit, or activity b: death, destruction c:(1): the ultimate state (2): result, issue

In time, events have a beginning and only one beginning, and an end and only one end. Examples are (1) the first minute (beginning or start) of class and the last minute (ending or conclusion) of class, (2) the first hour of a trip and the last hour of the trip, (3) the first day of a month and the last day of the month, and (4) the first year of life and the last year of life.

Objects that are not obviously time related or that have no distinguishable starting and ending points can have two "ends", points that determine the extent of the object. A shoe lace is such an object.

The week, a measure of time, defines the passage in time of seven distinct days. Thus the week has one beginning moment and one ending moment, one beginning day and one ending day. Terms and phrases such as "mid-week" (i.e.: mid-week services), and "beginning of the week" (i.e.: the delivery will come the beginning of next week), and "end of the week" (i.e.: he plans to be here at the end of this week) correspond chronologically to time segments within the week, respectively the middle segment, the starting segment, and the concluding segment. These terms and phrases give a sense and meaning consistent with the passage of time within the period of a week.

But "weekend" does not give a sense and meaning consistent with that passage of time within a seven day week. "Weekend" at least implies, if not "tally explicitly defining, that the First Day of the week is the last day of the week, which many people believe. Consequently "weekend" is a deceptive word that really ought not to be used unless clearly defined by the person using it that it only refers to the real last day of the week, the Seventh Day.

Servants' News Comments:

Are you ready to purge the word "weekend" from your vocabulary? You might also notice that the writer of the above article avoided using the names of week days of the week: Sunday, Monday, etc. Is this kind of teaching making people more righteous?

Some would say yes, and use scriptures like this one to support the idea: "And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the

name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth"(Ex 23:13). But what does this scripture mean? Does it mean that our mouths should never make the sounds of the names of false gods? How then could we read the Bible? It contains the names like Baal, Dagon, Chemosh and Molech in dozens of places. Furthermore, the Eternal himself uses place names named after false gods, some examples being "Baalzephon" (Ex 14:2) and "Baalgad" (Josh 12:7). Furthermore the Bible contains 6 of the 12 Babylonian names for months (Esth 2:16; 3:7; 8:9; Zech 1:7; 7:1) where it contains only three Hebrew month names (Ex 13:4; 1Kngs 6:1,38). Several of the Babylonian month names are derived from false gods. Even worse, a diligent teacher of the Scriptures and of Christ was named Apollos (Acts 18:24; 19:1; Tit 3:13). The name means "given by Apollo"—king of the Greek gods. Several other people in the Bible changed their name, but Apollos did not.

If the Bible teaches that we should not makes sounds like the names of false gods, then the Bible is not very good at following its own advice. Exodus 23:13 is better understood as "we should not address false gods". In other words, we should never say the name of a false god as **if** it were some kind of real being. **People should never get even a mistaken hint from our speech that we believe in false gods.**

But when we use the terms "Sunday", "Thursday", or "Saturday", does anyone today really think we are addressing a Sun god, Thor, or Saturn? Similarly, when someone uses the term "weekend," does anyone really consider it a theological statement about the timing of the Sabbath?

If someone believes that the avoidance of words like "weekend" are so important that we try to correct people for using them, they will alienate almost everyone and not be able to reach them with the important Gospel message. Many evils have been done in the name of religion, but very little evil has come about from secular use of terminology with a biblically inaccurate origin. (We believe it is a significant mistake to replace Bible terminology with false terminology—a Sabbath service should not be named a "weekend worship service").

Still, a few people may decide to stop using the word "weekend" "just in case

the Eternal does not like it". But should anyone let this uncertain idea override the clear commands to love others (1Thes 3:12), to be a light to others (Matt 5:14) and to give an answer for the hope within us (1Pet 3:15)? Eliminating "weekend" from one's vocabulary might help us feel more "righteous", but it will make our communication with others much more self-centered and ineffective. What happens if we greet an unbeliever on Monday and ask, "How did your previous seventh and first days of the week go?" We have let our religious terminology take center stage in our conversation, and apparently lessened our concern for the person we are talking to. By asking, "how did your weekend go?" we shift the focus off of ourselves and we are more likely to enter into a beneficial conversation with the other person.

All of us can learn a lesson from the apostle Paul. He did not practice pagan religion, but he was not afraid of talking about pagan religion and using it to teach others about Christ.

Then Paul stood in the midst of the **Areopagus** and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you (Acts 17:22-23).

The Areopagus was named after Ares, the Greek god of war. Some people today might believe that the Eternal would not want them in such a place, but Paul willingly spoke there. Paul introduced the Eternal to them as the one represented by the altar "to the unknown God". Did Paul worship at this Greek altar? Certainly Not! But he was not afraid to talk about it and to use it as a way to tell the Greeks that it was the God that they "knew nothing about" who created the universe.

The clear commands of the Bible make the gate to eternal life narrow enough. We do not help ourselves or others by trying to make that gate more narrow by adding technical requirements of speech, dress, food, Sabbath observance, etc. **Let us place our main emphasis on "the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith"** (Matt 23:23)

—Norman S. Edwards

"Truckers' Study" from page 2

This led beautifully into a discussion of prophecy and the gospel. What is the Gospel? The word means "Good News". How can we call the calamitous prophecies of the Bible "Good News"? The answer is: Those prophecies aren't the good news. **The Good News is described in Luke 4, where Jesus reads from Isaiah 61.** In Isaiah 61, the full gospel is actually revealed—salvation, binding up wounds, the acceptable year of the Lord, which is then followed by what the earth will be like after Jesus Christ returns. All of which is Great News.

I was surprised that they didn't have Bibles (for a man without a Bible he knew quite a bit more about it than one might expect), so they each took one and also literature and tapes. We talked for quite a bit afterwards and he asked about our church. I mentioned we keep the seventh day, and he asked me which day is the Sabbath of the Bible. I asked him, "What does the Book say?" He said, "It's the seventh day, and most people don't know that."

Afterwards, he invited me downstairs for a cup of coffee, and I was pleased to join him. I suppose the fellow just enjoyed being able to share his ideas, but also to hear things from a different perspective. Something to be said for those who are the pioneering/cowboy types—they know how to think for themselves.

Hopefully, these folks will contact us again on their next trip through.

August 2, 1998: We studied with two truckers, one from Virginia and one from Arizona. The young man from Virginia came in a little early and he and I had an interesting conversation on his church experiences. He is new to his community and is having a hard time finding a church he likes. He says they all talk about the same thing every week and he wants to get into more in depth study. I was able to share with him the first lesson of CEM's correspondence course, suggesting that if he found it helpful, he could write for the entire series.

He was a pleasure to speak with because of his obvious zeal in wanting to share some of the new things he had just learned from the scriptures. **He taught me a few things I had not thought of—**good for sermon material. The second man was a repeat visitor, although he remembered neither Arlo nor me. We have to presume that someone else took the study that week. It was encouraging to see the obvious enthusiasm these two men have for the Word and their eagerness to understand. It makes these Bible Studies so worthwhile. O that we should have that same zeal!

Arlo began by asking them if they had any specific subjects they might wish to study together, and the one man said he wanted to talk about adultery. We were able to share several lessons from Ephesians, such as Eph. 5:15-20

(be filled with the Spirit), 6:11-17 (putting on the armor of God), and 4:21-32 ("put ons" and "put offs"). The lesson is to fill your mind with God's word, with his spirit, with his music, and with his thoughts. Good habits will drive out bad habits.

Prophecy was covered, and I related how prophecies are not given as a circus sideshow but as a warning in the hopes that people would repent. Note the example of Jonah, and the words of Isaiah 58:1.

An interesting side note is that one man said that when he was in the Marine Corps he went with a couple of fellow Marines to some Bible studies put on by a large church that didn't have a building, but met all over the place. They seemed to minimize the role of grace and it seemed to him that they felt they had to earn their own salvation through not sinning. He only went a few times and never went back because he knew they were wrong. **He couldn't remember their full name, but they were some kind of "church of God".**

—Lenny Cacchio

[Brethren today who claim their evangelism is a continuation of the WCG's and/or Herbert Armstrong's work need to realize that the above attitude is not all that uncommon. While the WCG never officially proclaimed "salvation by works", that often appeared to be the reality to some of the people who attended.]
—NSEJ ☞

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