

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 7, No. 5 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be Sept/Oct 2001

Answers to “Hierarchical Leader” Letter

On April 25, 2000, I sent 34 letters to leaders, ministers and members of various hierarchical Church of God groups (letter is on page 8). I promised to print any reply letters I received (up to 3,000 words), and in this issue I am keeping that promise. The purpose is very serious. The life’s work of many people is at stake. Even if you have thoroughly studied and made your choice of congregation attendance, I believe the issues in this article are vital to understand, to help others whom you almost certainly know are facing the same issues.

The Worldwide Church of God taught the Sabbath and many other true doctrines to many people scattered around the globe. The WCG did this claiming to be “the one true church” that God was using. While that doctrine was wrong, it did not hamper the growth of the WCG because almost none of its members had any knowledge of other groups with similar teachings.

Today, that no longer works. New people searching for God quite frequently come in contact with more than one of the Church of God groups’ evangelistic efforts. Those who search the Internet will come into contact with many

groups. When they find multiple groups each claiming to be “the main one” God is using, they realize that something is wrong.

Historically, most of the groups that split off from the WCG and claimed they were the only true group never grew significantly (e.g. the Church of God, The Eternal in 1974). Most either just maintained their size, or dwindled down and disappeared.

It is just too difficult to convince a new person that a group of a few hundred—even a few thousand—people is God’s “Work” on earth.

On the other side, the Church of God International has represented itself as one of many groups serving God’s people. It baptized thousands of people and grew for many years. It would be many times its size if it had not lost so many members due to the personal difficulties of its former leader. Nevertheless, many of the people who split off from it formed other groups, some of which have continued for decades.

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Chadron State Park 2001 Feast:

**Pioneering a Way For Everyone
to Keep the Feast**

I observed many enjoyable Feasts of Tabernacles in years past. I learned a lot about the plan of God, I heard the Bible read, I sang and heard praises to God, I heard many other inspiring messages and I met a lot of fellow believers. I also feasted—had a lot of good meals. I think the Bible shows that all of these things should be done at the Feast.

In addition to those things, I also enjoyed a lot of exciting entertainment and tourist attractions. Most of the good meals I enjoyed were prepared and served at nice restaurants. Yes, church leaders preached that the saving of

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Keeping the Feast in Jerusalem

By David King

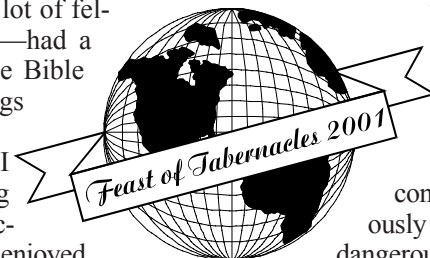
Jerusalem is probably a place where most Christians would like to keep the Feast of Tabernacles at some point in their lives. A city full of history, the place

where Christ once walked and was crucified, where Solomon’s temple stood, and where King David ruled Israel from.

But keeping the Feast in Jerusalem this year was considered too risky by some church groups, who previously had planned to go there in 2001. Most felt it was too dangerous, with the Palestinian *Intifadeh*—their rebellion against Israel through active violence against Jews and other innocent civilians.

Also in this issue:

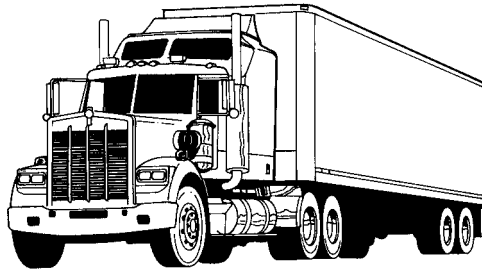
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Truckers Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo.
#85-87



The Trucker's Bible Study is conducted weekly at the Texaco truck stop on I-70, Oak Grove, Missouri, by Arlo Gieselman, often assisted by Lenny Cacchio, the writer of this series

September 16, 2001

Today, the Sunday after the Tragedy, I was disappointed that we only had three truck drivers. All three, however, were visibly moved by the events of the week.

I began with a prayer and turned to 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

I pointed out that I was happy that Billy Graham at the National Prayer Service on Friday stated that this nation needs to turn back to God and confess our sins before Him. This nation has humbled itself and sought God's face, but whether we will turn from our wicked ways is the open question. Often in our history when tragedy has struck, the leaders have called for a National Day of Prayer and Fasting, implying a need for national repentance. One can only hope that the people of this country will understand that our pride and evil ways could explain why God has removed His protection from us.

Peace is coming to the earth when Jesus Christ returns, and that is hope for us today. Still, we can pray for God's mercy upon us and that He will grant us repentance and heal our land.

We also got into some doctrinal issues. One of the men, who is quite new to Bible Study, says that he has concluded that Jesus Christ was a created being, made before the world began. I was interested in his perspective since this is a subject of debate in the Churches of God and has a long history. We examined various scriptures and we did not convince each other, but we were able to walk away respecting each other's viewpoints. I suggested that when we are in the Kingdom, we can approach Jesus Christ and ask Him for the truth of the matter.

[I think that is an excellent conclusion. We will all have a day of judgment and Christ will ask us what we did with our lives and why—He will probably not ask us to explain His nature. — NSE]

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You can also receive an e-mail notification for when the latest issue is available on the website (www.servantsnews.com). Thus the four options are: 1. snail mail only; 2. snail mail and link to website by e-mail; 3. link to website sent by e-mail; 4. PDF file sent by e-mail.

Please e-mail info@servantsnews.com to change your subscription option.

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 7, No. 5

Sep/Oct 2001

Servants' News is one of many ministries of the spiritual Church of God. 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 and teach Sabbath-keeping brethren who believe Jesus (Yeshua) is the Messiah, but we realize that the Eternal works with many groups and individuals.

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 groups, but is supported by those who personally decide to help this ministry. We do not have IRS 501(c)(3) status, but church groups are tax exempt without this status (see IRS Publ. 557, Nov 1999 ed., p. 15).

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

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

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Circulation mailed from the USA: **1739**;
Internationally reprinted: **109**; e-mail: **189**

Servants' News is published bimonthly (six times per year). Subscriptions are free to people who request the publication and are genuinely interested in it. *Servants' News* is published by Norman S. Edwards (3690 Bath Rd, Perry, Michigan—this is not a mailing address). He reserves the right to refuse subscriptions for any reason. Periodical postage paid at Perry, Michigan (USPS 016-995, ISSN 1522-0621). Postmaster: send address changes to *Servants' News*, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107.



News from Local Congregations



This column includes information sent to us from a variety of groups. Servants' News does not necessarily agree with the teachings or practices of these groups. Please ask about them before attending their functions.

Basic Literature Available

For over a year, I have corresponded and spoken with Al Van Dyk (pronounced "van dike"). He is a long-time Sabbatarian who writes a lot of tracts and other basic literature useful for evangelism. I have intended to make some of his literature available to *Servants' News* readers, but simply wanted to take the time to read more of it first.

A few times, I have caused difficulty for some people by highly recommending a ministry that I had studied lightly and that seemed good, only to find major difficulties later.

I have read several of Al Van Dyk's articles and found them good. His understanding of how the church should operate is much like mine. I think I have some different prophetic views—but then my own understanding has changed over the past few years. While I would like to take the time to read more, I feel I am doing a dis-service to my readers who could benefit from his literature. I think most can compare literature to the Bible and ask God for direction by His Spirit.

Al Van Dyk is retired and writes at home. He does not have room or money to print a large number of each of his articles. (He has printed only a few.) When someone requests his articles, he simply takes his masters to a copy-store and has copies made. He ran out of money when he tried to give literature away, so he charges a nominal amount for each article—usually 25 cents to one dollar, with large booklets several dollars. He encourages people to freely copy any of his works.

His literature list is available free from *Servants' News* or directly from

him by writing Al Van Dyk, PO Box 1035, Bella Vista, CA 96008.

—Norman Edwards

Background of Alan Knight

[Alan Knight is the author of *Primitive Christianity in Crisis*, a book read by many CoG members and discussed in *The Journal* and other CoG media. Mr. Knight described his background in a letter to Craig White:]

...I regret it is out of print and am no longer able to fill orders for the interest that just seems to roll on even though we no longer are advertising [a second edition is planned to print within a year].

As regards my background: I was converted to Sabbatarian Christianity many, many years ago at the age of 16 (I am now 60). There were very unfortunate circumstances at that time regarding my family, very staunch conservative Protestants who ultimately disowned me but years later partially reconciled to me. I was hauled before a succession of Protestant psychiatrists and at one point was threatened with incarceration in a mental hospital if I did not give up the Sabbath. I stood firm and fortunately they did not follow through on the threat.

I attended Ambassador College for two years. I left WCG around 1976 and later joined the Church of God Seventh Day. As you know, there is a segment of CG7 that appears to want to follow the new (Tkach) WCG. I already had done a great deal of research and had wanted to write on the subject after I retired, but was so upset with what was going on in CG7 that I decided to do some writing immediately on the issue of apostasy.

What ultimately became the book

Primitive Christianity in Crisis began, believe it or not, as a three-page letter addressed to Whaid Rose. No one seemed to listen or care, so I enlarged it several times, reaching ultimately some 35 pages.

At about that time I became very sick and was unable to work full-time. Confined to home and with plenty of time on my hands, I then set about turning the paper into a full book. I was sick for about three years and in that time produced the first edition of the book.

I am employed in the field of computer software and have been working as a contract consultant for the past couple of years. I sometimes work a long way from home and fly back and forth between home and work several times a month. When I am away from home I once again have loads of time on my hands and in the evenings have been doing research for the second volume, *The Spirit of AntiChrist: the Other Gospel, the Other Jesus*. My current contract expires at the end of January and I have been informed it will not be extended. The contract job market is so bad right now I probably will not be working for many months, which will give me time to advance the work on the second volume.

Ultimately, God willing, I plan to write a series of many books under the series title, *The World of Primitive Christianity*. I am just a single individual doing this work. I am not an organization; I am not a church; I am not a minister and have no intention to become one. My purpose is to make this historical information available to all Sabbatarian organizations for them to use as it benefits them.

I believe that one important benefit of this information is to give Sabbatarians a strong foundation and

confidence in who they are and what they represent within the broad sweep of history. We are swiftly coming to a point when there will be increasing pressure on Sabbatarian Christians to rejoin apostate Christianity, and we see that happening already. I hope that many will be encouraged and heartened by understanding this information and will be strengthened to resist and remain loyal to our heavenly father and his son Jesus Christ in the dark days to come.

Greetings to all, and God bless,
— Alan Knight
aknight@dnai.com

Bible Sabbath Musicians Assoc. Needs Members, News

BSMA website: www.sabbathmusic.org.

The BSMA is an organization of sabbatarian musicians and those with related music interests. It serves both its own membership and the sabbatarian community of believers.

Founded by Robin Todd a few months ago to help foster an environment of co-operation and brotherhood amongst the many sabbath-keeping congregations through music, the group opens its website with 32 members from around the world. Many more have expressed a strong desire to join, but have yet to visit the new website or return information through the mail.

The BSMA now offers on-line membership with a simple questionnaire that takes only a few minutes to complete. There is no membership fee. The only requirement is to share the goals of the organization, which you can read on the website.

Although most of the site is still under construction, there are working links for 1) CDs and cassettes produced by sabbatarian artists, 2) List of members with some basic information about each, and 3) the membership questionnaire. Robin welcomes any new information about recording artists not yet posted.

Yet to come is a message board, music news from within the community, other types of music available (such as sheet music, lyrics, etc.), and products available to help those who want to delve into the world of songwriting, recording, etc.

One of the major projects Robin knows he needs to undertake almost immediately, is the means to share this information with those not on the Internet. This will mean establishing a link between the BSMA and pastoral ministries for passing along information to congregations. It will also mean finding ways to communicate to the many who are not a part of an organized fellowship, or are in smaller fellowships.

The BSMA cannot report on every Sabbath special music performance, but some events we would like to report might be: 1) invitations to local talent nights, 2) interdenominational or open fellowship concerts, 3) special guest performances by Sabbatarian recording artists, 4) music announcements revolving around festivals, conventions, etc. Start sending those in for posting anytime now.

Robin and Liz ask BSMA members and the community it serves to exercise patience as the organization grows and learns. They are already getting some good suggestions, and just need some time to implement.

If you're not on the Internet, but would like to become a member of the BSMA or know more about them, write to: BSMA, 6413 Stephan Ct. S.E., Lacey, WA 98503.

— Robin Todd
robinsings1@attbi.com

Raymond Cole Dies at 74

Raymond Cole died on September 25, 2001 of a stroke. It was his second, the first having left him unable to speak and paralyzed on the right side. He is survived by his widow, Myra Cole and two daughters, Lynn and Jann. Myra cole can be contacted at the address, below.

Because their farm was destroyed by a tornado, Raymond Cole's parents moved his family to Oregon in 1936 when Raymond was 10. The family had long been Sabbatarian, and Raymond was heavily influenced by the preaching of Herbert Armstrong during his teen years. He was one of the first four students at Ambassador College when it opened in 1947.

His name and footprints were in the cement at the original gate to the

college, though they were later filled in with cement when Raymond left the WCG (reminds one of the way history was rewritten in Stalinist Russia every time an important government figure left the Communist Party.)

Raymond Cole believed that Herbert Armstrong's teaching was inspired of God. When Herbert Armstrong changed his teaching on Pentecost and divorce and remarriage, Raymond felt he had no right to change what God inspired. Members in his Oregon congregations had similar trouble believing these changes. Raymond taught that this was the "great falling away" mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. So, in 1974, he incorporated his own church, the *Church of God, The Eternal*, even though he considered it the same spiritual body as the WCG.

Raymond believed that commissions only come from God, and that he did not have a commission to preach the Gospel to the world, so he never did. His church membership was always in the 100 to 300 range. He felt it was his job to simply continue to teach the same doctrines as Herbert Armstrong for the rest of his life, and he did that. One of his members told me that Cole's sermon tapes maintained HWA's excited, hollering style until the end. Even though he was aware of dozens of other groups that were claiming to do the same thing, he felt that they had at least one or more errors.

Christ knows the heart of Raymond Cole and will judge him in love, mercy and understanding.

But we can learn from his experience. While it is vital to seek and obey the truth of God, it is a mistake to base one's fellowship on a vary narrow doctrinal definition. The seven churches in Revelation 2-3 had a variety of doctrinal errors, but Christ did not command brethren to leave them—He commanded those in error to repent.

While the Church of God, The Eternal had a few congregations, many of its members were completely scattered, finding fellowship with other believers only at the Feast. The problem was made worse by continual splits within itself over the exact

interpretation of HWA's teaching.

Even in the last few years, one of their ministers, Bryce Clark, left to start a new group (Bethel Church of God, P.O. Box 25345, Eugene OR 97402; www.bethelcog.org).

Also, I received a call from a man who had left the Church of God, The Eternal because he had discovered the postponements in the Jewish calendar and concluded that Mr. Armstrong had all of the truth except for that. There were only two others meeting with this man and the purpose of his call was to find if I knew of others of similar belief—otherwise, he was left to conclude that the true church now consisted of only three people!

John Brisbee is the new leader of the Church of God, The Eternal, Box 775, Eugene, OR 97440; tel: 541-344-8880, Internet: www.cogeternal.org

Help for PCG Members

A faithful few are trying to build a group for former members of the PCG led by Gerald Flurry. In many ways they are trying to gather as much information as possible, while still maintaining a certain amount of objectivity.

"We are not in the business of slander" says webmaster Henrik Blunck, "but we have noticed that much effort has been spent trying to suppress the literature of Herbert W. Armstrong."

Mr. Blunck is referring to the fact that Don Tiger's material was worked against by both Gerald Flurry and later David C. Pack of the Restored Church of God. "David [Pack] has refused to accept the link between his church and the PCG," he says "but they made that link when they did the very same thing the PCG tried to do, suppress it!"

The question seems to be one of willingness to tell the whole truth versus being afraid to lose tithes.

"We can't know the hearts of men," says the webmaster. "But we can see the effects of actions taken. It seems many COG-leaders are afraid to accept the document known as the 1939-document on church government."

HWA offered very clear, and in many cases correct, explanations of biblical subjects, but this could soon

be lost in the mire of authoritarian government. "It is our job both to help and nurture those hurt either directly or indirectly by family or members in the PCG. We need much more information, and are very grateful for the material we are already processing. It is an interesting job, but we are only very few with the expertise necessary for building a website. But keep the information coming, and we will do our best to adapt this to the website," he ends.

The group website can be found at www.pcg_flurry.subnet.dk

— Henrik V Blunck
h_blunck@hotmail.com

[Many times, people in a group that calls itself the "one true church" will only listen to other members of that group or former members of that group. Servants' News has offered copies of the 1939 article, Did Christ Reorganize the Church? referred to above for seven years. However, PCG members would most likely accept a copy from another PCG member or maybe a former member. This website is just beginning, but it may become a fine help to PCG members. — NSE]

HWA, WCG History Websites

The Herbert Armstrong Library, dedicated to preserving all of HWA's and WCG writings is again online at: www.herbertarmstrong.org

HWA coworker letters and other items can be found at:

www.hoselton.net/religion/hwa/coworker/

Kosher Gelatin Source

Here is a source of real "Kosher" gelatin if you are interested. They sell it in case lots so you may want to get together with others to purchase it: Great Lakes Gelatin Co, 253 Commerce Drive, PO Box 917, Grayslake, IL 60030; tel: 847-223-8141, Internet: www.greatlakesgelatin.com

— Raymond King

Papers Being Scanned, Please Help if You Would Like

I have collected the following Ambassador College theses and papers. Some have already been scanned by me and others. However, most still re-

quire top quality computer scanning.

1) If you know of anyone who is willing to scan them, please let me know as soon as possible. I need a top quality job done requiring an excellent scanner and software. Please advise me of the estimated number of pages you would like to scan.

2) Some items are not in a good enough condition to scan, but will have to be re-typed (such as the 333 page "Key to Northwest European Origins"). Again, if you are aware of anyone who can assist, please let me know. I would like to know the estimated number of pages he or she would like to re-type;

3) Please advise if you are aware of any other AC items in addition to those listed below.

Thanks in advance,

— Craig White, GPO Box 864,
Sydney, Australia 2001
surfer1@tpg.com.au

History of the True Church:

- What Became of the Church Jesus Built?* by Briggs, L. (1972)
- A Handbook of Church History* by Blackwell, D. (1973)
- The Plain Truth About the Waldensians — a Handbook* by Blackwell, D. (1974)
- Now Revealed—the True History of the Early Christian Church* by Kelly, R. (1967)
- Were the Waldenses a Part of God's Church?* by Grabbe, L. (1981)
- The Beliefs and Practices of the Church of God in Transylvania* by Marx, G.
- Six Papers on the History of the Church (Sardis Era)* by Nickels, R. (1973)
- History of the Seventh Day Churches of God* by Nickels, R. (1973)
- Plain Truth Indexes since 1934*
- Good News Indexes since 1951*
- Tomorrow's World Indexes*
- Youth Magazine Indexes*
- Correspondence Course Indexes* (various editions)
- 900 series index
- Collection of articles on the history of the Philadelphia Era
- Collection of papers on the history of the True Church
- Early Literature of the WCG (collection of 1930s material)

The Great False Church:

- Satan's Great Deception* by Meredith, C. P. (1953)

The Plain Truth About the Protestant Reformation by Meredith, R. C. (1958–59)

How and When the Church Festivals Were Changed by Hoeh, H. L. (1952–53)

The Origin of Medical Practice by McMichael, S. (1969)

Peter in Rome? by Albert, D. (1973)

More About Simon Magus by Martin, E. (1964)

Collection of articles, papers and CC lessons on *Paganism in the Modern World*.

The Law & the Sacred Calendar:

Collection of articles and papers on Tithing (from AC)

Collection of articles and papers on the Holy Days (from AC, 1974)

The Hebrew Calendar: A Mathematical Introduction by Kossey, D.

Pentecost Study Material (from AC, 1974)

Calendar and Eclipse Interrelationships by Herrmann, K. (1967)

Collection of articles on the Law.

Collection of articles and study papers on *True Masculinity and Femininity*

The Sacred Calendar (collection of study and research papers)

Economic Policy to Help Man Achieve Maximum Potential by Goonan, T.

Food, Christianity and the State.

The Bible:

Miscellaneous Bible Helps (AC collection of study papers)

Old Testament Israel (AC collection of articles and papers)

An Outline of Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures by Martin, E. (1971).

Old Testament Survey (from AC, various study articles on books of the Bible)

Bible Chronology Charts (Collection of short papers)

Miscellaneous Doctrines:

The Systematic Theology Project (from AC, c. 1978)

Bible Doctrines: Scriptures & Notes (from AC, c. 1985)

Divorce & Remarriage (collection of study papers and articles)

The Bible and Ecology, the Environment etc.

Mastering the Self (collection of articles)
False Prophets and False Brethren (collection of articles)

Women's Role in Society (from AC)

The Doctrine of Matthew 18:15

The Harmony Society by Schulz, R.

Church Government (collection of articles)

Counselling Teenagers by Albrecht, G.

The Sacred Name

The Plain Truth About the "Sacred Name"

The Sacred Name—Is it Sacred or Mystical?

Origins of Nations:

Key to Northwest European Origins by McNair, R. (1963)

The French Speaking Peoples in Prophecy by Apartian, D. (1967)

A Two Thousand Year Analysis of the German Character by Marx, O. (1969)

The Race Change in Ancient Italy by Martin, E.

The True Origin of the American Indian by Rea, B. (1968)

The Bible and Race (collection of articles on the Bible Doctrine on interracial marriage)

Prophecy:

God's Temple in Prophecy by Neff, L. (1986)

The Place of Safety (collection of articles)

Cities: Today and Tomorrow (collection of articles)

End-Time Prophecy (collection of articles)

Ezekiel's Message / The Captivity Doctrine (collection of articles)

The German People and Prophecy (collection of articles)

History:

Creative Development by Burky, R. (1989)

Exploring Ancient History by Schulz, R. (1967)

A Chronological Outline of History by Kneebors, M. (1973)

Classical Authors—Greek and Latin (from AC)

Josephus as Historian and Apologist (from AC)

Flavius Josephus—An Index to Vital Subjects (from AC)

Index to the Works of Josephus (from AC)

Compendium of World History (two volumes) by Hoeh, H.L. (1969)

Collection of papers and letters by Hoeh, H.L. & Herrmann, K. (1970s)
Papers from AC about various movements:

Is a Conspiracy Responsible for America's Decline?

The Conspiracy Against the Family

The Movement to Destroy the Family

Britain's Road to Communism

The Real Origin of Communism

Who will Bury Communism?

What's Behind the Shift in US Foreign Policy?

Is it Dark Behind the Iron Curtain?

What Church Members Should Know About Masonry

Mainstream of History (variety of AC study papers and articles on ancient, Roman and European history).


— Craig White
GPO Box 864
Sydney
Australia 2001

[What an incredible variety of papers that Craig White has assembled. I hope he will find people to help him scan these items and place them on the Internet so that they may be studied by all who are interested. What a great contrast this is to the days of the WCG when the very existence of these papers was unknown to nearly all WCG members.

My guess is that the quality of these papers vary greatly. Some were probably written from the point of view that the WCG already "had the truth"—so the researcher ignored any evidence contrary to WCG teaching. Other papers may simply cover trivial items of little interest. But many in the WCG believed that they were seeking the truth that would someday be taught to the whole world—so they were very diligent to do a good job.

Any researcher and writer needs to realize that God holds them accountable for what they do. If they write error that continues for generations, they are at least partly responsible for all of the people who are deceived by it.

Truth can stand when there is free access to all information—because it is the truth. Every lie written against the truth will someday be exposed. It is only lies that are protected by attempting to suppress people's access to the truth. The WCG was often like the USSR or other dictatorships in its efforts to remove the names of former members from publications and its official history.

It is nice to see another project offering full access to these papers and historical records. —NSE] 

“Answer to ‘Hierarchical Leader’ Letter” from page 1

If the Bible knowledge and life experience of the members of the hierarchical Church of God groups is to be used, they must eventually face the reality of what God is clearly doing today. Many hierarchical groups hope that something will happen so that they will be recognized as “the one” by most of the CoG brethren, and then they will all come flocking in their door. But that is not happening.

WCG Breakup Similar to Others in History

These leaders need to realize that what has happened with the breakup of the WCG is not new in history. There are hundreds of religious denominations today, and thousands of fragments of groups that were once much bigger. A great many major Christian movements that occurred throughout history still have a few adherents who still say “that was the time when God was working” and we are “holding fast” to their teaching. These fragments frequently are not growing or serving others.

Indeed there are many scriptures where Christians are commanded to “hold fast” to the teaching that they have (1Th 5:21; 2Ti 1:13; Titus 1:9; Heb 4:14; 10:23; Rev 2:13, 25; 3:3, 11). However, holding on to what one has, does not mean that one stops actively doing the work that Christ says His followers would do (Matt 24:46; 25:14–30; 28:19–20; Luke 12:37–43; Rom 2:13; 1Cor 9:16; Jms 2:18; Rev 2:19). These verses show that the believers who will “reign with Christ” are those who are actively doing His work when He returns.

The fact that Church of God groups have a greater biblical understanding than many other Christian groups does not make them any less susceptible to the problems that have plagued Christian groups and denominations throughout history. Many groups have thought they had preached the Gospel to the world, and that they just need to wait for prophecy to be fulfilled and “the end” to come. Those groups usually either made big changes or died out slowly.

Almost all Christian movements

start with a leader who wants to teach and who is willing to debate almost anyone who will listen. Later the leader helps to train others who also teach with zeal. This expansion process may continue a short or a long time. But eventually the group begins to focus on what has already been done. They are sure they are right, so there is no need to answer other’s questions. They begin to think that if someone won’t accept their truth the way they teach it, that “God isn’t calling them”. They do not realize that people have new questions which they are failing to answer. And so when there is little interest in their message, they stop training ministry and evangelists to teach their message—and the decline goes further.

It is interesting to note that only one leader of a group responded to my letter—and that was a very small group. None of the other leaders responded or even had somebody respond on their behalf. If they had clear answers for these questions and had numerous well-trained helpers, one would think that they could have asked almost anyone to answer. **If they were really concerned about the many people who have left their organizations for independent groups, they would be anxious to prove that they are right.** One would think that the hierarchical leaders would love to have their writings published unaltered in an independent paper. (I would like them to publish my articles in their papers!)

As it happened, most of the answers I received were from non-ministers who took it upon themselves to answer. That is wonderful to see. Years ago, most people in the WCG would not dare write to a publication outside their own group and answer questions without the WCG’s approval. While nearly all of these people still support their hierarchical organization, their inner strength to stand up and defend what they believe even when their own leaders do not is good. That strength will probably outlast their organization. If their organization collapses or if they leave it some years from now, they will probably not be afraid to stand up and represent God directly.

While some of the people who answered letters spoke very negatively of me, one only has to think back to the

time when most of us were in a church organization and thought negatively of those who left. They believe they are doing the right thing and do not want to see someone speaking against it. In some ways, these letters are like the words of “peace talks” during a war. Each side may feel like they are being destroyed by the other, but many of the problems are based on misunderstanding. In other cases, problems are real and need to be solved.

Independent Congregations Need Much Improvement

I am not saying that the dissolving of church organizations into independent congregations would suddenly solve all of our problems. Most independent groups have a very long way to go to become stable, local, congregations using a variety of spiritual gifts as well as being bastions of truth, doers of good deeds and teachers of many. Independent groups still need a lot of practice working with others and patiently helping them through their mistakes and weaknesses. We need to realize that we have mistakes and weaknesses.

But there is a lot of hope. Alan Ruth posted my *Starting a Local Congregation* article on his website (www.biblestudy.org). While I was writing this article, I received a call from a person who believes God has inspired him to become a minister to people who do not go to Church in Rhode Island. He was well aware of the Sabbatarian history of Rhode Island, and was learning from a great variety of Sabbatarian groups. He does not plan to form an organization or go to a seminary, but simply to teach. He already has a number of people interested. He is not the first I have spoken with like this.

I believe that strong, independent, local, non-denominational, unincorporated congregations were the mainstay of first century Christianity and that when reestablished today, they can be a powerful tool in God’s hands.

Who Received the Letter

The letter was sent to the 34 people and offices listed below. I sent it to heads of organizations, and then usually to a few others within an organization. The reason I did this was to hopefully increase the response. It has

been my experience that a letter to a leader frequently gets filed somewhere and forgotten, but when someone else in the office or the organization also receives the letter and talks about it, there is a better chance that it will be answered. When I did not have the name of someone else who worked at the office, I sometimes sent a letter directly to the church office.

As it turned out, I actually received more answers from "lower level" people than leaders. When I published the letter in *Servants' News*, I received several more responses which I hope to print in the next issue.

In alphabetical order by church name, here are the groups that received the letter. Only the underlined names responded:

Church of God

David Hulme, Brian Orchard, Steve Falk (letter to office)

The Church of God, Inc.

Ronald Weinland

Church of God Evangelistic Assoc.

David J. Smith

Church of God In Truth

James Russell

Church of God, A Christian Fellowship

Frank McCrady II, Larry R Salyer (letter to the office)

Church of God, Orlando

Robert Elliott

Church of God's Faithful

Robert Ardis

Church of the Great God

John Ritenbaugh

Church Outreach Ministries

Robert Roenspies

God's Church the Very Elect

Colin Sutcliffe

Living Church of God

Karl Beyersdorfer, Val Burgett, Ben Falkner, Carl McNair, George Meeker, Jr., Roderick Meredith, John Ogwyn, Wayne Pyle, (letter to office)

Restored Church of God

Don Tiger, David Pack, (letter to office)

Philadelphia Church of God

Gerald Flurry, Wayne Turgeon, (letter to office)

United Church of God—IA

Fred Kellers, Leslie McCullough, Melvin Rhodes (wife wrote).

[Note: I did not send any letters to the Church of God International,

Servants' News, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan, 48872-0107, USA

April 25, 2000

Dear Leader in a Hierarchical Church Organization,

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I am sending this letter to Church of God leaders who are attempting to continue the work of Herbert Armstrong. If you have answers to the following questions, I will gladly publish your entire response in *Servants' News* (up to 3,000 words)—even if you send a previously written article that answers these questions. After Pentecost, I intend to publish lists of groups that *did* and *did not* respond to this letter—both in *Servants' News* and in *The Journal*.

1. Do not the members in your own church organization prove that the Eternal does not always govern from the top down? For the past 20 years of his life, Herbert Armstrong taught that any problems "at the top" of the church government would be cleaned up by God Himself. Yet, Herbert Armstrong appointed Joseph Tkach, who appointed his son, who reversed much of the truth that Herbert Armstrong taught. Herbert Armstrong's appointees never told former WCG ministers or members which was the "right group" to join. No group has any "signs" that make it obviously "the one": no miracles like the early apostles, no annual new-convert growth over 10%, no media outreach anything like the WCG. Your group may claim to be the only *one* following Herbert Armstrong correctly, but it was your ministers and members who were able to think for themselves, study the Scriptures and *decide to join*. They were not commanded from the "top down", but they disobeyed the man appointed by Herbert Armstrong.

2. There are members who left the WCG, joined another WCG split-off group, then joined your group. Are not these members proof that these other split-off groups are part of the Church of God and therefore brethren? Does your group automatically rebaptize or discipline former WCG members who attended another split-off group before joining yours? Or do you welcome them with open arms? I think it is wonderful to welcome them. But if you consider people in other groups *as brethren*, then why don't you encourage your members to fellowship with *these brethren*, share joint activities and services, etc.? Why do you continue the sectarianism that Paul spoke against? (1Cor 1:10-17; 3:1-10.) How do you explain this to the new converts that come to your group? If your group is truly and obviously doing the most significant work of God now, would not the intermixing of brethren cause more of them to see your group and begin to attend it? Or are you afraid that your members will continue to check your teaching against Scripture as they did when they left the WCG—and might see problems with your group?

3. Is it possible that Christ intended to end Herbert Armstrong's work? Nearly every group that tries to continue his work is splitting and shrinking. HWA has been dead for 14 years—almost no teenagers remember seeing him alive; the world leaders he visited are out of office. In another 14 years, most former-WCG ministers will be retired or deceased, and most of the adults who heard HWA prophesy "these things will happen in your lifetime" during the 40's, 50's and 60's will be deceased.

Eternal judgment is one of the six basic doctrines (Heb 6:1-2). Paul told believers: "For **we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2Cor 5:10). He also said: "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged" (1Cor 11:31). I am not your judge; you do not have to answer these questions to me. **But if you cannot answer these questions to your own members and the members of other groups, how will you answer Christ?** It is easy for a person to think he is right when he is surrounded by people who agree with him. I know; I worked for the WCG for 18 years. It is much more difficult when one must answer questions from others who disagree. The New Testament shows Christ and His Apostles spent much time answering difficult questions from Pharisees, heretics and sometimes brethren. What will you do?

Sincerely,

Norman S. Edwards

The Church of God Outreach Ministries, Christian Educational Ministries, United Christian Ministries and other groups that, from my experience, openly accept and often work with other Church of God groups.]

— Norman Edwards

The following letters are the replies received, reproduced in full as promised.

Bob Ardis, Head of the Church of God's Faithful

[This group is a small split from the Philadelphia Church of God and their response is probably quite similar to the thinking of the PCG and other related groups.]

LETTER:

Church of God's Faithful, PO Box 279, Eutawville, SC 29048.

May 9, 2000

Dear Sir,

I am responding to the form letter you sent to other "Hierarchical Leaders" and me.

You had requested four of our booklets, which we promptly mailed to you the 1st of April 2000. From the study of the booklets, you should have determined that we of the Church of God's Faithful believe our commission is to warn the Laodicean Church. We believe the Laodicean Church is the Philadelphia Church of God, located in Edmond, OK, headed by Mr. Gerald Flurry. We send our warning material **only** to members and ministers of the PCG.

RESPONSE: I realize that Herbert Armstrong and many protestant writers before him view the churches of Revelation 2 and 3 as seven church eras. I realize that the PCG and its off-shoots have written hundreds of pages on the subject. I do not mean to offend you, but when I stand before the judgment seat of Christ, I plan to disregard all of those words and say that I listened to the words of Christ who said **seven times**: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

There are very few things in the Bible that Christ repeats seven times. But since I have ears, I am going to listen to all seven messages that Christ gave and examine myself to see if I have the problems Christ talks about. And if I do, I am going to do what Christ says: "Repent!" Christ does not instruct anyone to go join another church!

LETTER: Through a study of the first two

booklets, *Elijah's Message to the Philadelphia Church of God* and *Bloody Jezreel* our beliefs on these points are clearly made. We sincerely believe Gerald Flurry was raised up by God to lead the very powerful Laodicean Work of Jesus Christ (Rev 3:14–19). The 7th Candlestick (Rev 1:20) was ignited and given to Mr. Flurry as his work began in Jan. 1990.

The centerpiece of the PCG Work was the book authored by Mr. Flurry, *Malachi's Message to the Church of God Today*. This book, of course, contained the **truth** of the biblical book of Malachi that the priesthood, or ministry, goes off-track in the end-time. He brings out the vital understanding, also, that "a man of sin" takes control of the Church of God (the Temple) and causes a "great falling away" from truth (see 2Thes 2). This book, *Malachi's Message*, was sent to all members of the WCG. I am sure you received a copy.

Gerald Flurry was the one God used to **warn** the WCG and her daughter churches that have split off from her. Please read the enclosed paper, *God Speaks to Us*.

RESPONSE: Gerald Flurry, the PCG and their off-shoots greatly exaggerate their affect on the WCG. I worked at the WCG headquarters from 1977 to 1992 and had many friends in many departments and in the field ministry. Please note the following points:

1. Thousands of people were concerned about the WCG's doctrinal changes before the PCG even started. Many members left on their own to join independent groups or existing organizations. I specifically know that the plans for the Church of the Great God, the Global Church of God and even the United Church of God began in 1989 and 1990.

2. Gerald Flurry was not known by Herbert Armstrong and was largely unknown to Pasadena Headquarters staff (until he started the PCG). Of the ministers who did know him, very few considered him an effective leader and teacher. Some of Mr. Flurry's early writings reflected a clear lack of understanding of how Mr. Armstrong and his

assistants worked. Hence, even though Mr. Flurry had a working organization and was paying his ministry, nearly all of the WCG full-time ministers waited to join another split-off group.

3. While *Malachi's Message* was a helpful book in sorting out some of the WCG errors, it had errors of its own and had to go through many revisions. Many WCG members never got it, fewer kept it, and even fewer read it. I still meet people who were members of the WCG in 1990, but who do not know anything about the PCG.

4. The priesthood, and the ministry have gone "off track" repeatedly throughout history. It happened in the first century, it happened in our day, and it happened many times in between. One should have a good grasp of history before concluding that Scriptures were written "specifically for today" (or specifically for 1986).

LETTER: In answer to your first question; **Do not the members in your own church organization prove that the Eternal does not always govern from the top down?**

For someone to have worked for the WCG for 18 years, it is a pity you did not learn the basic number one **truth** taught by Mr. Armstrong. Absolutely, God does rule from the **top down!** God is in charge and He is in the process of creating God-Beings like Himself and Christ our Lord. We are commanded to follow those over us, **as** they follow Christ (1Cor 11:1). God needed to conduct a test to determine **if** the begotten son's of God would follow Christ, and **love** the **truth**, or just follow a man (2Thes 2:10).

As HWA often said, "you just don't get it." What a **truth** that was! Ministers and members who were only following a man and not keeping their eyes on Christ, turned from the **truth**, some a little, some a lot. But most **all** turned from the **truth**. However, God is still in charge and Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church.

RESPONSE: Yes, for 18 years, I heard Mr. Armstrong preach that if there was a problem in the church, God would cor-

rect it from the top. Before he died, he commanded us to follow the pastor general who would replace him. But now you tell me that God conducted a "test" (putting Joe Tkach in the WCG) and required each member who loved the truth to disobey both Herbert Armstrong and his successor. Then, God gave "faithful members" another test to see if they would disobey Gerald Flurry and follow you. (Hmmm... your members may have caught on by now, and will be studying to determine when it is time to disobey you and follow someone else.)

All, joking aside, I think you are right and Mr. Armstrong was wrong. There are many scriptures that show we must obey God rather than the leaders who are over us (Dan 3:18; Matt 10:28; Acts 4:19; 5:29; 1Cor 11:19; 1Jn 4:1). God never promised that our leaders would bring us all to the truth, but that His Spirit would (John 16:13). God commended the Bereans not for accepting one teacher as being "inspired of God", but for checking each doctrine that he taught (Acts 17:11).

LETTER: You are being impatient Mr. Edwards. Don't worry, God is working it all out. There are 3 ways God will use to make it plain where Christ is Working in His One True Church.

(1) Those faithfully following Christ will recognize where His Church is through **new truth** being revealed in that Church (John 16:13). This is happening at this very moment.

(2) The **power** of Jesus Christ in His Church will be obvious to **all** to see when it is time for the miracles, signs, and wonders to begin as "training" for the 2 Witnesses.

(3) For those who refuse to believe the **new truth** and those who will attribute the miracles, signs and wonders to the power of Beelzebub (Mat 10:25), they will understand, finally, in the Great Tribulation (Rev 12:11).

RESPONSE: I certainly agree with point (1). I have learned a lot of new truth since leaving the WCG, and I know of many others in a great variety of congregations who would say the same. Yes, people who have never attended a Church of God group are learning truth through the Holy Spirit—and if Christ claims them, they are in His Church!

As far as points (2) and (3) are concerned, please realize that hundreds of Christian groups for hundreds of years

have claimed that they are soon going to have miracles, signs, and wonders that will prove they are God's Church—and it has almost never happened. Some groups claim to have great healings and miracles now—but have been found to hire actors who pretend to be sick, then well. **I have witnessed healings and miracles of God, but most have been in a quiet way which could easily be doubted by skeptics.** I believe that God may again send servants who will do great miracles for all to see. But *having* those miracles, and *promising* to have them are **two very different things**—I hope you will accept my desire to "prove all things" rather than to "accept all promises".

LETTER: Mr. Edwards, you very much need to read, study, and believe our booklet, *The Day of the Lord*. It explains the last part of your 1st question. You say our people had to "think for themselves." That is true! They thought of what they had learned in the past from God's Elijah, held fast, and continued following Christ. Mr. Armstrong died, but Christ lives on! And He is here in the Day of the Lord! He has come suddenly to His Temple (Mal 3:1) and beholds the mess that it is in. Those who could think, and remember to be faithful, are being made into His Special Treasure right now, at this time, in the Day of the Lord. Please request our booklet, you have much to learn.

RESPONSE: I refuse to believe that Christ "has suddenly come to His Temple" just because you say that He has. You have no proven prophetic track record and Herbert Armstrong, who some men have declared to be "Elijah", did not either. HWA frequently used terms like "in this decade", "in ten to fifteen short years", "in your lifetime", "in this century". Most of these have proven false. God told us **not** to listen to prophets whose word does not come to pass (Deut 18:22). How can HWA be "Elijah" if Elijah was a prophet and HWA was not?

As far as answering question #1 is concerned, you have verified that people joined their groups because of their personal understanding of what was right, not because they received a top-down command from God's human leaders to join the groups.

LETTER: To answer the second question

quickly: **All** of us who were called by God, either directly or indirectly, by the ministry of Mr. Armstrong are begotten sons of God and are **brethren**. The accompanying article explains this thoroughly.

RESPONSE: I read this 13-page article and the essence of its arguments are the same as those given by many other groups: "God has one church organization and those who are not in your group are in rebellion against God—unity will be achieved when everyone quits their group and joins yours". You also use the circular argument of claiming you are the "True Church" because you have all the right doctrines, but then you command your members to believe your teachings because you are the "True Church".

The reality is that "church organizations" do not exist in the Bible; the word "church" always either refers to all believers or to the believers in a specific geographical area. The idea of believers aligning themselves with certain human leaders was condemned by Paul (1Cor 1:10–15; 3:1–9). Unity exists among all those who follow Christ and trust Him to correct His wayward sheep.

LETTER: Your third question involved HWA's work ending: Yes, Sir! You can be absolutely **sure** God intended for Mr. Armstrong's **work** to end... because it was **completed!** Again, **all** of these questions are explained in our booklets. Also, please be aware that God Almighty knows exactly how much time has expired since the death of His Servant, Herbert Armstrong. He knows **all about time** and He has revealed to the CGF the greatest secret involving **time**, of all time! Please read our booklet, *The Little Book... Unveiled at Last*.

Mr. Edwards, I have briefly answered your questions here. They are thoroughly answered in the accompanying paper and in our 7 free booklets. Jesus Christ is the Head of His Faithful Church. My Job is to **warn** Gerald Flurry of the fact that he has left his commission, has become rich and increased with goods, has need of nothing, has become lukewarm to the Law of God, and with his abusive government has gone way off track (Rev 3:20). Another part of my job is to answer any questions that those of the "Outer Court" may ask me, as you have done (1Pet 3:15; Prov 26:5). I sincerely and truthfully before God want to help **any** of my brethren that I can. However, I must stick to

my commission; our Lord will do the rest.

Robert G. Ardis.

RESPONSE: Since I told you that I would print a letter up to 3,000 words, but cannot print hundreds of pages of booklets, I was hoping that you would answer the questions directly. This is what Christ and the apostles usually did. By referring to numerous books, it seems that your answer is extremely complicated, or that you do not have a good one.

I think it is good that you are willing to point out that Mr. Flurry has abused church government—I have received many similar complaints from his members and former members. It may be that God has given you the job of exposing him. I think if you would honestly study the issue, you would also find that Herbert Armstrong abused government in a very similar way.

LETTER: I have answered you, so please answer this for me; once you have read and studied our material and you realize it is truth from God, **what are you going to do?**

Looking forward to hearing from you.

In brotherly love and in Christ's Service,
[signed]

RESPONSE: If I realized that your material was the truth, then I would join your church organization and do whatever you told me to do since you claim to be the "true shepherd" whom God is using today (page 12 of your attached article). In reality, I will put your literature in my files in the company of the writings of numerous other teachers who claim to be the one man who speaks for God. I believe your group, as well as many others that stemmed from the PCG, are much too obsessed with identifying the "Laodicean church" and interpreting other prophecies very specifically with no proof that these interpretations are from God.

After spending a decade reading many such prophetic interpretations, seeing some of the prophecies fail, seeing some of the groups scatter, and seeing some of the teachers die, I do not believe it just because it seems to "sound good" or "make sense". **To teachers such as yourself, I ask this question: "Would you keep on teaching what you are teaching even if no man or**

woman agreed with you?" If your honest answer is "no", then you might think about whether your commission is from God or whether it is a fiction reinforced by the other people around you who agree with you.

I thank you for writing and it does seem that you have a desire to help others and to teach those who follow you. Teaching the Bible, encouraging people to find Godly solutions to their problems, praying for them, organizing services for them are all good, important things. I believe that God will reward you for these. A stricter judgment is required of teachers (Jms 3:1). I hope you have thought about what you will say in the Judgment if Christ asks you, "Why do you think I gave you the commission that you claimed?" Christ is merciful, and will judge leniently if we really did not understand (Luke 12:47-49).

May God strengthen you and each member of the "Church of God's Faithful" to better follow Him.

— Norman Edwards

L. Wayne Pyle, a Living Church of God Member

[L. Wayne Pyle worked in the area of media planning and promotion for the Worldwide Church of God for many years, and then worked for the Global Church of God beginning 1995.]

LETTER:
San Diego, California

May 14, 2000

Dear Norm,

You have invaded my personal privacy. I never wrote you, or solicited anything from you. How did you get my address?

RESPONSE: From a relative of yours who thought you might have been interested. I did not think that sending a letter would be considered an invasion.

LETTER: You have an attitude that SHOUTS off the page. Your lack of faith in what Jesus Christ is doing is pitiful. Your disrespect to and for Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong is patently obvious and shameful. You ought to know better.

RESPONSE: If Christ has shown me truth through the Bible that is contrary to the teachings of Herbert Armstrong, then I must follow it and teach it, even if it requires going through Herbert Armstrong's writing line by line and showing where it is inconsistent or contrary to Scripture.

On the other hand, I have greater faith than ever in what Christ has done over the centuries—taking the words of His Apostles and causing them to be written, copied, translated and distributed to every nation on earth. Christ accomplished this mission primarily through people who held doctrines different than yours and mine. There have also been numerous people who have expounded the truth of the Bible in various ways, and those who have done good works in the name of Christ. Herbert Armstrong's organization was one, but Christ has done much more than that.

LETTER: When we were at Worldwide, I was impressed by you and your brother. I thought the two of you were an excellent addition to the Work—a great help to many of

us [both worked in the Computer Dept.]. During the WCG apostasy, I was delighted to see you go with Global and use your expertise in the computer department to help Global get started. But then you quit. As far as I can see, you forsook the Body of Jesus Christ. The beloved Apostle John declares: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1Jn 2:19). We are judged by our fruits, and what I have seen from you in the past several years is not good.

RESPONSE: I enjoyed the 18 years that I worked for the WCG. Most of that time, I thought it was "God's work on earth" and I put my heart into designing the best computer systems I could—thinking that they might be used till the Millennium and beyond. I am glad that I did the best that I could with what I knew at the time.

I cannot see how leaving the Global Church of God, a human church organization, means that I "forsook the Body of Jesus Christ." After all, Rod Meredith

left the GCG when he had difficulties with the men who lawfully gained control of it.

LETTER: I don't know why you left. I worked closely with Dr. Roderick C. Meredith for four years from 1995 through 1998. I was able to observe him in all manner of situations. I find him to be a true man of God. A true servant. A man of the utmost spiritual integrity. A man whom Mr. Armstrong himself personally trained over many years and decades. Dr. Meredith spent thousands of productive and provocative hours with Mr. Armstrong—personal hours—quality hours. A man whom Mr. Armstrong personally ordained as an Evangelist, and whom he appointed as the Second Vice President of the Work of the Living God—second only to Garner Ted Armstrong—for many years.

Yet, Dr. Meredith is not perfect. He makes mistakes, but not flagrant ones outside of God's Law. I'm saying he is not committing adultery, not a drunkard, not abusing his office in the ministry, etc., etc. He truly fulfills the ministerial qualifications I read in 1 Timothy 3, and I have consistently seen God working in him through the Holy Spirit. He has good fruits, but he is the first to say he is not perfect.

RESPONSE: I agree that Dr. Meredith has a personally clean reputation and has worked diligently all of his life to "do the Work" as he understands it. I stopped working for Dr. Meredith because I was not free to openly talk about the things that I was studying in the Bible—I was supposed to represent the headquarters view.

I was later disfellowshipped from the Global Church of God because unnamed people had read my writing *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?* and left the GCG because of it. My difficulty with Dr. Meredith is that after all the years of "training" that you mention, and after claiming to be the head of the church that Christ is using, he is not able to openly answer doctrinal questions as Christ and His apostles did. He may say that he does not have enough time, but there are probably hundreds of people who have left the GCG and the LCG over the issues in my writings.

Would not it be worth a day or two to prepare and record an open debate so that his members could see both sides of the issue and know that he was right? Of course, I believe that the Bible does not

support his view and that the real reason most of the Church of God leaders will not answer doctrinal questions in an open forum is because they know they would have a lot of trouble. But I suppose they learned that well from Herbert Armstrong—he stopped answering open questions in the 1960s. It is much easier to look like one has the answer to everything when you can control the questions.

LETTER: You, Norm, do not seem to believe that Jesus Christ did indeed clean up His Church—the Worldwide Church of God—from the top down. Is your memory so short that you've forgotten who died the horrible death—40 weeks exactly from the day he spoke against God's holy Sabbath? I have no doubt that Jesus cleaned up His Church, and is still in the process, although I don't think there is much more to do as far as the Worldwide Church is concerned. It is obvious to many of us that the "of God" is no longer any part of the Worldwide Church organization.

RESPONSE: This paragraph illustrates the very problems I raised in my letter—organizations can no longer consistently define what "the Church" is. You said that I "forsook the Body of Christ" ("the Church", Eph 5:23), by stopping to work for the GCG in December 1994. Yet, you say that Christ "did indeed clean up His Church—the Worldwide Church of God—from the top down" by the death of Mr. Tkach, Sr. in September of 1995.

Which was the body of Christ, the GCG, the WCG or both? And if both, then can we also include the UCG-IA, the PCG, and numerous other groups? How about the Church of God Seventh Day, or some African or Chinese Sabbatarians?

Furthermore, God replaced Joe Tkach, Sr. with Joe, Jr. How did that "clean up the WCG"? The doctrinal changes just kept coming. Did either of the Tkaches—the men at the top—ever tell their members to go to the LCG where the truth was? Did not the members decide to do this from their own study?

LETTER: I believe Jesus Christ personally selected Joseph Tkach to succeed Mr. Armstrong, but the selection was not based on any innate good qualities in Mr. Tkach—far from it. Rather, our Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ selected Mr. Tkach to clean up and clean out His Church! It was the best way at that time for Jesus Christ to see who was really following Him. Jesus knew all along how sick we were as a church. I do not believe this process could have been accomplished under the leadership of a truly converted man—a man loyal and faithful to Jesus Christ and true Christianity.

RESPONSE: So what you are saying is that with over 30 years of God's government, with His hand-picked leader clearly in charge, with every member who openly opposed HWA being disfellowshipped, the WCG became full of people who were not following God. The human hierarchy was unable to tell which people truly followed God and who were just doing whatever their human leaders required of them. But by putting in a bad leader, God was able to see who was willing to obey Him, rather than the human leader. I agree with this.

Numerous Bible passages indicate that most leaders are bad and that God tries each person to see what they will do in varying circumstances. When I saw the doctrinal changes implemented by Joseph Tkach, Sr., I began to study my Bible like never before. I saw that many were wrong. But I also realized that when I came into the WCG, I studied many doctrines such as the Sabbath, Holy Days, Clean Meats and others in detail, but then later accepted many other doctrines based upon "Church Government" and did not study them very thoroughly. So, I have continued to study.

People learn more when they are directly responsible to God than when they are simply responsible for obeying a human religious system. I have learned that lesson both from the Bible and from my own life. As the years go by, and the CoG hierarchies continue to break up, I am sure that most of the other brethren will learn that lesson, too.

LETTER: God spared Mr. Armstrong from the heartbreak of seeing so many fail in faith and becoming spiritually shipwrecked. Remember how Mr. Armstrong often questioned the conversion of church members? He would shake his jowls and exclaim words to the effect: "Brethren, I don't think half of you are converted." To me, hindsight has proven Mr. Armstrong's feelings about the Church's condition to be stunningly correct.

RESPONSE: I remember Mr. Armstrong saying that. He would say it in his many sermons about the two trees—how God's way was give and Satan's way was get. I know many members who gave much to the WCG most of their lives, cooking their own meals in cheap apartments and buying their family's clothes in secondhand stores. Herbert Armstrong, by his own admission, wore the best suits, ate in the best restaurants and stayed in the best places. HWA said these things were necessary to command the respect of kings, but John the Baptist found them unnecessary (Mark 1:6; 6:20). Who learned the lesson of "get and give"?"

LETTER: You, Norm, insultingly insinuate that we in the Living Church of God are "attempting to continue the work of Herbert Armstrong." We are not "attempting" to do it. **We are doing the work of the living God.** Mr. Armstrong himself would burn your ears for claiming it was "his work". Mr. Armstrong always credited the Work to God in Heaven—never to himself. Did you have selective hearing in Mr. Armstrong's time? Regardless, you, and anyone with you, sadly lack Godly faith.

RESPONSE: I realize that Herbert Armstrong frequently credited God for the "Work". But as Paul's letters are Christ's work through Paul, so the WCG was Christ's work through Herbert Armstrong. The big mistake is that where Paul acknowledged that God worked through other apostles and teachers, HWA claimed that all of Christ's work on earth, both spiritual and physical, was through Him (see organization chart published in the March 6 *Worldwide News*, reprinted on page 26, Nov 1998 *Servants' News*). The Dec 1998 *Servants' News* contains an article about 26 groups that taught the Sabbath, Holy Days and/or clean meats, most of which did not learn any truth about Herbert Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong certainly knew that there were many Holy Day keepers among the 200,000+ members of the Church of God Seventh Day groups. But he virtually never publicly acknowledged that God might be doing a work outside his organization.

It can also be called "Mr. Armstrong's work" in that he tolerated only people who were at the same level of understanding as he. When Mr. Armstrong

kept a Monday Pentecost, he disfellowshipped Sunday Pentecost people. When he switched to Sunday Pentecost, he disfellowshipped those who continued to keep it on Monday. Obviously, HWA was not claiming that God rejects a person for keeping the wrong day—because, whichever is right, he kept the wrong day at some point.

The issue is that HWA would not tolerate a member who was either ahead or behind HWA in their understanding. Understanding the truth a few years early, or taking a few years to understand the new teaching would have gotten most people disfellowshipped. This kind of thing happened with many other issues. It is little wonder that so many WCG members simply followed their headquarters when doctrines began to change.

LETTER: If you think God should put a banner of His Church, think again. He is not doing so for a great reason. It is called faith, which you and many others seem to have lost sight of. It is clear to me that if God did put a banner over the Church, many would jump on board quickly but would not have true, abiding faith—the faith God wants and absolutely requires. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

RESPONSE: I completely agree with you that God is not granting great signs and wonders to a specific group because He wants people to think and learn rather than to just "go where God seems to be working". I think He deliberately allowed multiple small splits to occur in the WCG that people would not simply all go with the largest one and start a new WCG. I think God wants people to think beyond "which church organization to join", but to see that there are no church organizations at all in the Bible. Having done both, I think it takes far more faith to live and teach a Christian life not being a part of a "church organization" than it does to be a member of a typical CoG hierarchy.

You have questioned my faith several times in this letter, but what do you think takes more faith for a man with a family of six? To work for a \$50,000 salary plus benefits for the GCG, a church of thousands that took in millions per year? Or to start an independent newsletter, not teaching that people must tithe to me, not

having anyone pledge to support me, not even taking up collections in services?

LETTER: What will you do when I tell you that the Living Church of God is presently experiencing double-digit growth? We started this new phase of the Church of God less than 18 months ago. Did you ever know at Worldwide how long it took for people to come to baptism? Back in the 1950s it took an average of nine years! This is from the time they were added to the mailing list to the time they were baptized. The reason for this is that there were very few ministers and churches in those days. In later years, at our peak under Mr. Armstrong's leadership, the average was about three years.

RESPONSE: I am happy to hear that you were growing and serving new people, though I would guess that most of this growth is people who were still coming from the GCG or other groups. But if you are reaching new people, I praise God for it. I have talked to a number of people in independent congregations who got interested from GCG or LCG, UCG and PCG broadcasts, but then left those groups because, in their view, they all "taught the same thing", yet each claimed to be the "true Church" and they could not get along with each other. This is the very issue I hoped to address in this letter.

LETTER: Mr. Armstrong spoke considerably and devoted reams of publications about God's government, yet all of that seems to have gone way over your head. Never, ever will God abdicate His rule as the supreme God Almighty, and His rule from the top down. God always, always rules from the top down. You nor anyone else will ever rule over Him or Jesus Christ. Lucifer thought he could. Do you? The core of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is about government—God's holy, righteous government, and yes, from the top down. If you think the Church ought to be ruled from the bottom up, you are in opposition to the government of God.

RESPONSE: Mr. Armstrong spoke about government a lot in his sermons, and wrote a lot of short articles on the subject, but never wrote one booklet devoted to the scriptures on the subject.

He covered it some in the "Church" chapter of *Mystery of the Ages*, but the single longest thing I know about is his May 1974 Coworker Letter, which I

have reprinted with a lot of related scriptures and comments. Mr. Armstrong's 1939 *Good News* article, "Did Christ Reorganize the Church?", uses more scriptures and accurately shows how the Church hierarchies came from the Catholic Church. My article, *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?*, shows how the concept of "ordination" was written into the King James Bible and why some Bible translations rightly do not contain the word "ordain" or "ordination" at all!

Most of Mr. Armstrong's later speaking and writing on church government consisted mostly of frequently-repeated, dogmatic statements that are not found in the Bible. He also accused people who advocate any kind of democracy or republican government of trying to rule God. While humanism and Satanism do teach that the individual is supreme, Mr. Armstrong seemed to be unaware that nearly all Christians who are opposed to **human hierarchical government** are *not* opposed to God being at the top. **I am not opposed to God being in charge forever.** (And even if I was, God would remain in charge anyway!) But I do not believe that the Scriptures teach that "God always works through one man" and that we are bound to accept one man's understanding of Scripture no matter what.

For example, HWA said, over and over, exactly what you said: "the core of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is about government". But what did Christ say? "Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." **This is the first and great commandment.** And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37-39). He also said: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:29). What is wrong with Jesus' answers? If HWA was teaching the "core" of the Bible, why did he have to constantly repeat so many phrases that are not even found in most Bibles: "church government", "church offices", "hierarchical", "top down", "one-man rule", etc.

I will not rewrite my government paper here, but the clear message of the Bible is that each individual's obedience to God and learning to love his neighbor is the central message of the Bible, and that God has allowed men to use a great

variety of means to work together and to provide justice when one offends another.

LETTER: There is not one second of lapse with God. I think what may confuse you is all of the latitude and freedom that God gives each and everyone of us within His law and government. He gives us plenty of time and space to prove ourselves. Are we really willing to submit to Him and those whom He puts over us? Can God absolutely trust us in the farthest, most remote region of the universe forever and ever when we are changed into spirit beings? If we cannot trust Him implicitly now, which takes the faith of God through His Holy Spirit, how can He ever trust us? He will not allow any more satans to disrupt and destroy the universe.

RESPONSE: You speak of submitting to "those whom He puts over us". How do I know whether God has put Joe Tkach, Rod Meredith, David Hulme, the UCG general conference or some other men "over me"? If I try to evaluate all of their teaching and see who has the most truth, am not I deciding, rather than God or them?

I agree that God is looking for people to rule with Christ in the first resurrection (Rev 20:4-5) and He wants those whom He can trust. For thousands of years, there have been millions of people who have unquestioningly followed political, military or religious leaders—even to the death. Following charismatic human leaders for good or evil has never been a rare thing on this planet. But when those leaders sometimes died unexpectedly, their followers were frequently scattered because they were simply following a man. When Mr. Tkach took over the WCG, the situation was little different. Hierarchy did not produce a lot of people dedicated to God in the same way.

I have met believers from hundreds of groups over the last few years, and the ones whom I would trust to follow God are those who have been independent believers for 30 years, keeping the Sabbath, Holy Days, and other laws of God and teaching them to their children and to others. Many have had to struggle with difficult personal situations along the way. They have not done this because there was a local minister there to say "do it or you won't go to the place of safety with us", but because they are truly filled with a love for God and a

desire to obey Him.

LETTER: You remind me of the virgins in Matthew 25:8-9: "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them and sell, and buy for yourselves." Yes, Norm, you have to spiritually buy into what the Church of God has. But it looks like you are not buying. You have gone out from us and are not part of us. But there is time for you to change this dangerous situation.

We in the Living Church of God do accept with open arms brethren from other Church of God groups, and non-Church-of-God groups, as long as they come in peace with godly humility; and there are a number of brethren who come and go from our services. We totally support the idea that anyone and everyone should hold up the Scriptures to prove we are the Church of God.

Norm, my wife asked me why am I writing this letter. She exclaimed, "You know it won't do any good. He won't change..." I think my wife is right, but this letter helps order my thoughts on the issues you raise. I hope for your sake, however, that you do change and repent before it is too late for you and your family. God is giving you time to do so, and He is very merciful.

Top-down Civil Government Anyone?

Has anyone ever wondered why God allowed the USA to become the most prosperous nation ever, when its Constitution clearly makes "We the People" the highest authority in government? If "top down" is God's way for human governments, then should not monarchies or dictatorships be the most prosperous? Why was the Worldwide Church of God headquartered in a nation with the "wrong government"? Why did it not move to Cuba where it could be under a "biblically correct" hierarchy? Would God have blessed their choosing the right form of civil government and corrected Castro from the "top down" if he caused trouble for the church? Or is Proverbs 29:2 the most important?

While the USA government has many problems, the WCG and the rest of us still seem to like its results better than any other government.

Do not send me any more mail. Your letters are not welcome. I don't care to see your foolish rationalizations and self-justifications. I say this to your shame. As far as me and my family are concerned, we will continue to do and support the Work of God and remain in God's Church (Josh 24:15)

Sincerely,
L. Wayne Pyle

RESPONSE: Wayne, I've known you for quite a while, and I can remember what it was like when I was in a church organization and when somebody else "left it". **I think I realize what you are feeling for me and that you and your wife want the best for me and my family and I thank you both for that.** I realize that you do not want me to send you the answer to this letter, but since it is being published, you may eventually see it anyway.

I can also honestly say that I am familiar with the teachings of the WCG/LCG, as well as my own biblical studies of church government. I cannot, in good conscience, go back to a hierarchical church organization and say, "I believe God is restoring His government through you—let me join you." You, on the other hand, are apparently familiar with only the WCG/LCG teachings. I have had people from the various Church of God groups find some problems with my writings, but the major parts they simply have no good answer for. I have written many things to Mr. Meredith, and he has never attempted to answer me from the Scriptures. If you read my writings, there is a much better chance that we could help each other. Either you would be able to show me where I am wrong from the Bible, or you would agree that the Bible teaching on

governance is different than you once thought.

I realize that the LCG and many of the other CoG groups teach their members not to read outside literature. But again I ask, who will be best able to keep following God in His Kingdom? Someone who has only read and heard the truth? Or someone who has read a variety of things, some true, some false, and who has been able to discern the truth from the error?

Galatians 6:1 states: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." God wants mature believers to help others. If you would like to read my writings and find error in my ways, I would be glad to be helped out of it.

— Norman Edwards

Diane Rhodes, Wife of UCG-IA Minister

[Diane Rhodes is the wife of Melvin Rhodes, a UCG-IA minister. While her writing may appear a bit fiery, I have known her for some time and realize that she has been a great help to many people in difficult situations by listening to what people were saying and straight-forwardly expressing her opinion when others might just "beat around the bush".]

LETTER:
April 30, 2000

Dear Norm,

This is Di. I hope you take this to heart as I communicate it because I sincerely feel you need to think about this. I am referring to the stupid thing [the hierarchical leader letter] you sent Mel (which I have intercepted) containing the threat to publish names of any "leaders of hierarchical groups" who do not respond.

Have you lost your mind? You obviously have nothing to do. I mean, are you so lacking in anything to publish that you have to scrape up this?!? C'mon, Norm—have the decency to admit that God is not inspiring nor leading you to any great crusade these days, and **get a job**. Let's discuss this...

Didn't you address this sort of thing in a SN a while ago—like asking people to ask their ministers these questions? If you like, I could ferret it out and prove it, but surely you remember this, right? So why dredge it up

again? You have presented **plenty** of information and challenges to people throughout the life of SN, and I guess we can say that people have made their decisions. What are you trying to do **now? Live their lives for them???**

People have a right to decide for themselves whether hierarchy is right or wrong. And whether you like it or not, people also have a **right** to make the **wrong** decisions.

Now, even if this needed to be done (?!), I could maybe understand you sending this to the HQ of such groups, but to guys in the field? Doesn't make sense to me. It is the HQ that is the center of the hierarchy, surely.

And the threat stinks. What the heck is *that*? Doing this sort of thing is like becoming the Jerry Springer of the x-COG community—pick a provocative situation, then air it publicly, possibly ruining a few lives in the process—**great** ratings! Sad to see you sink to that.

Well, if you publish the fact that Melvin didn't answer you, you better publish **this** letter, verbatim, so they know why I have no intention of letting him **see** that stupid letter.

To "get a life" is the best advice I could offer you, Norm. (Not that you were asking for any, but I hope you take it anyway.)

Sincerely,

— Di Rhodes

RESPONSE: You are right, I have dealt with this issue before. I think I under-

stand what you are saying here. **You are asking for peace**—to let people go on and serve God in the groups they are in without any more debate as to which is the "right government". I would guess there are dozens of ministers and their wives, in numerous groups, who are saying "amen" to that.

I did not want to be a CoG "Jerry Springer", and I am sorry that I did not more clearly state in the letter that I sent it to **leaders** of groups as well as **a few** ministers and members. It was not my intent to put certain non-leaders on the spot, but to send multiple copies to each group so that someone might talk to the leaders about it and increase the chance of an answer.

Unfortunately, these issues will not go away by ignoring them. Any peace achieved by ignoring them is temporary. There are too many people with family and friends in multiple groups that must face this issue every Sabbath or Feast. I am thinking about the long term Church of God future. What kind of services will there be when the AC-trained ministry is retired and gone? Will our children be in thousands of tiny splinter groups each claiming to be "the main group" that God is using? Will they just give up on it all? Or will

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Letters About the UCG-IA Audit Analysis

In the July/Aug 2001 *Servants' News*, on page 9, there was an Analysis of the CPA's annual audit report for the United Church of God, an International Association. We received the following informative responses to that article.

LETTER: Concerning the UCG financial report, I know that the Elders are paid a salary. I would imagine that this is included under "ministry". The deacons are unsalaried. Our minister covers four churches and if each church has an elder this would account for a good deal of the money allotted. I don't know how much they receive. It could be that the report you published is misleading and is doing a disservice. I realize that UCG, at least the hierarchy, have an attitude of being the main church but there are some very dedicated and hardworking individuals involved. Our elder has to do 3 out of every 4 sermons and it is the same for the deacon and his sermonettes.

My hope is that we can, in time, all see ourselves as God's Church working together. Is being part of a corporate church a sin to be repented of as Gary Pifer seems to think? I am finding the thought somewhat unsettling. I will continue to read your publications as I find them a wonderful whetstone. I want to be informed and not fed only what my local church offers.

Also I would like to know what other groups are operating in my area of SW Wisconsin. Can you direct me to any?

Most sincerely,

— Don Anderson

RESPONSE: There is no doubt in my mind that some—probably most—of the ministers of corporate churches work very hard for what they are paid. Ministers in corporate churches have been responsible for much Bible teaching, serving brethren, and many other good works. Ministers in corporate churches have also been responsible for teaching error and hurting the lives of some brethren. But these same good and bad things have also happened in independent Churches.

So is it a sin to be in a corporate church?

"Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin'" (John 19:41). For decades, I was blind to the problems of being in a corporate church. God seems to have a very light judgment upon people who really did not know what was right to do (Luke 12:47-48).

After doing all of the research to write *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?*, *How Do We Give to the Eternal?* and *Starting a Local Congregation*, I could not go back to work for a corporate church with a clear conscience. But most people who work for them do not have this knowledge.

Serious sin enters the picture when people have knowledge of what they do (God knows what we know!). If a person in a corporate church is deliberately avoiding reading about or thinking about this issue, God may hold them more responsible. But the real issues of sin come up when a person in a corporate church has to decide between their church and the Bible. When people in corporate churches conceal or participate in corruption in order to keep their job or their friends, that is a sin. When people make unjust decisions based upon corporate doctrine or policy when they know that the Bible or the facts of a situation would warrant a different decision, that is a sin. It is these kinds of sins that most need to be "repented of".

Might there be a time when a minister realizes that the corporate structure is not what the Bible teaches, but prays and believes that God wants them to stay in it so that they can honestly serve people and gradually help them to see the truth of the issue? He did allow righteous Daniel (Ezek 14:14) to work in Babylonian government for nearly his entire life (Dan 1). Daniel had to stand strong in the face of threatened punishment at times when he chose to follow God, rather than the human leaders. Corporate churches are not Babylon and represent far less of a problem. Nearly all righteous men have to work in imperfect systems to accomplish His purpose. Honest ministers in corporate churches probably experience times where it would seem a lot easier to "go along with the corporate practice". But like Daniel, they can still stand up and do what is right.

— Norman Edwards

LETTER:

Hi Norman,

My name is Stuart Segall. I pastor a UCG-IA church in Sedro Woolley WA, and help out in some outlying areas as well. I have read *Servants' News* for several years, maybe five. Yes, I am a paid elder. I graduated in 76 from A.C. and have been an elder for about 22 years. Since David Hulme was removed, I do not feel I have ever been asked to do anything against my conscience as a UCG-IA elder. I have always read your publication with respect and an open mind. On page 9 of the latest issue with the UCG Audit, may I add just a few things for your thoughts?

When I was hired, I was told our 2nd tithe was withheld for us and given to us at the Feast time at 9 percent. 1 percent held as tithe of the tithe. I was never ever under the impression that it was a "bonus". I asked several others before I wrote you and all felt the same. My salary is exactly the same as it was 11 years ago in WCG. For years I actually made less, and it was only last year that I was given my salary equal to what I received 11 years ago.

I make \$45,000 plus the \$4,050 2nd tithe saved for me, totaling \$49,050. My congregation knows this. Most of the guys my age and tenure make the same. I work long hours 7 days a week often, and at age 47, I do not feel this is unreasonable. I have a wife and two teens. My wife serves countless hours in all capacities for the congregations we serve. They love her. Similarly, the vast majority of UCG pastors are married and have wives who serve as much. I am sure there are exceptions, but they are indeed exceptions. Our wives are half our ministry and yet that is only in service. There is no remuneration of any kind, financially speaking. It would be so reasonable for you to see this in the humble, but positive light that this should be seen in.

We publish a pay scale range to all the members. Some managers and department heads and long-tenured ministers make more so I am sure that is why the average must be larger. I do believe we could and should be more open about that beyond the pay range. Dixon Cartwright once published that in *The Journal* (or maybe it was

in *In Transition* under John Robinson).

I do not know about my health insurance as far as costs, but I can tell you we have a \$1,000.00 deductible, and then we pay 20% of everything except dental, which we pay 50%. We do not get any "in between the lines" perks. We have an annual conference and if I want to attend, I have to pay my own way.

We are told not to accept free goods and services from the members of our local congregations because such things have been abused in the past. In the old WCG structure there were reports of a small number of ministers who accepted goods and services that were noticeable in size or value. However Mr. Armstrong taught us not to, and we were from time to time reminded of that from Church Administration all the way through the early 90s. I have never been served in such a capacity. There are times I would have desperately appreciated it though. We are taught strongly servant leadership. Thankfully I am happy to say that with my peers, I know of none who received nor believe they should receive such since United started.

UCG has strongly adopted and promoted Servant Leadership. We have been taught it at the national and regional conferences, as well as being given education sent to us from the Home Office to the entire field ministry. We are not perfect, but I am not ashamed how UCG handles its finances. I feel they are good stewards of the money they receive despite mistakes made by all of us. I trust with respect that you will be fair with the flip side of the coin.

Sincerely,

— Stuart Segall

RESPONSE: The main thing the author of the article was trying to do was encourage the UCG-IA to make the truth known to the members. You have done a lot to clear this up. I wrote to the UCG-IA headquarters for clarification but never received a response. I realize that many corporate ministers work very hard. I have known of some whom I believe did not, but these are probably a minority. There are not many people who would stay with the same job for 11 years with pay that went down as much as it went up.

I think it is important that the rules are known to all so we can either learn from God's leaders how to righteously deal with finances or else see that the

leaders are wrong and work for change. The law was written for all to read—even the part of the law that contained the responsibilities of the priests and other leaders. God never gave a secret and separate law for the leaders. After all, are not all believers in training to rule with Christ?

As an example from the past, many of my friends and I worked at the WCG headquarters and paid third tithe in the appointed years. It was not a burden for me, but for some it was a near disaster. When one of my friends told his boss he would have to quit so he could find a better-paying job and be able to pay third tithe, he was told that headquarters employees were exempt from paying third tithe. Many there had not paid it for decades. However, this policy was not documented nor taught to new employees in any organized way. I am glad to see that this type of practice stopped.

If the typical salary of men who have worked for 20 years is \$49,050 (including second tithe), that means that there must be some big salaries to push the average up to \$61,297. I understand that the top salary is \$85,000 with its second tithe of \$7,650 coming to \$92,650. (For comparison, my family's Feast expenses plus the entire cost of running our Feast site for about 100 people has always been less than \$7,650). If there are a lot of 30-year ministers with a combined salary and second tithe in the upper \$60,000s, that would explain the \$61,297 average salary. My understanding is that the UCG has few ministers with less than 10 years of service who would be "low" salaried. Insurance, employer-paid social security and other administrative costs probably make up the rest of estimated \$81,159 cost per employee per year.

As you said, your wife works hard and is not paid at all. A \$61,297 average salary may look high compared to the USA median of \$38,885. but in many families, both husband and wife work. If a minister and his wife are both working hard full time, that comes out to only \$30,648 each, well below the median. The New Jerusalem Bible says: "Elders who do their work well while they are in charge earn double reward, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (1Tim 5:17). Most other translations say "double

honor", but Greek dictionaries say that the word can refer to monetary value. If it does mean a double wage, one might ask, "Double of who's wage? The average minister? The poorest minister? The poorest member? The richest member?"

There is no point in beginning to ask these questions as long as salaries are all kept secret. Many church groups publish all salaries. If ministers are responsible to God, then why would God want to keep his method of working secret from the church? If ministers are responsible to the people they serve, then the people should certainly know what they are paid. (The salaries of our elected government officials are set by public laws.) Only if ministers view themselves responsible to the corporation or to themselves does it make sense to keep their salaries secret.

The disclosure of benefits is also important. It cannot hurt if what is being done is reasonable. If a church organization is paying too much for insurance or other benefits—maybe somebody else in the church will notice and find them a better deal.

There are people who believe that ministers should not have any fixed compensation, but rely on what God sends them—be it money, goods, services or whatever. Our family of six has lived that way for seven years—without health insurance—and I believe that God has taken care of us. Though I must say that on a day by day basis I have not always had the kind of faith that I should have had.

In the Scriptures, God has taken care of His followers in a great variety of ways. Some were farmers, some were cared for by others, some were in royal courts, one was fed by ravens, one ate locusts and wild honey, etc. I believe God takes care of **all** those who serve Him now—maybe not always in the way that they would like, but sufficiently. He will certainly reward everyone at the resurrection.

There is more that could be said on this subject, but I think that we have accomplished a lot in explaining to members how the UCG-IA salary money is spent.

I hope that church leaders everywhere will realize that they are much

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“Chadron State Park 2001 Feast” from page 1

“second tithe” and the trip to the Feast of Tabernacles was “God’s vacation plan”.

Being the inquisitive type, I frequently thought about the Millennial Kingdom and wondered how the Feast might work then. Who will run the restaurants, motels and entertainment attractions in the Kingdom of God when everyone is keeping the Feast? Who will run the stores? When will the people who operate gas stations and airports get to go to the Feast? Only after everybody else leaves to get to the Feast? I can remember getting off an airplane, getting into a rental car, and barely getting to the Feast in time for the first service. When would the people get there who had to shut down a car rental agency or an airport first?

Obviously, we could go on asking questions like this, and we can answer most of them by saying: “in the Millennium, all individuals and governments will be planning to keep the Feast, so they will work the problems out. That is probably true. Airlines will probably publish a separate schedule for flights at Feast time, ensuring that they all end a day or so before the Feast. Gas stations and food stores will probably have similar published hours; people will have to travel to the Feast soon enough, or buy what they need and carry it with them.

There is no doubt that much benefit was achieved by Feasts of Tabernacles held by Church of God groups. But if we are to learn the full spiritual lessons of Feast-keeping, we ought to think about the way the Feast was kept in the past, and will be kept in the future. It would certainly be a mistake to think that a large number of non-Feast-keepers are needed for believers to have a truly joyful and meaningful Feast.

Nevertheless, the average “Church of God” Feast observance relies heavily on non-CoG businesses. Indeed, Church of God festival planners and cities hosting Feasts frequently speak of the total dollars that they think will be spent at a Feast site—a boost to the local economy. Some of this is the purchase of goods, but most is the purchase of services—maids, restaurants,

entertainment, etc. This Feast-keeping method works in our society because the number of Feast-keepers in a city is usually very small compared to the number of businesses hoping to profit from the Feast. (The WCG had difficulties when it built large sites in small rural areas. Local restaurants, shops and roads were occasionally overloaded to the point where they simply could not provide the service needed, and everybody was unhappy. The WCG sometimes reduced the problems by organizing members to make group meals right at the meeting hall.)

Spending the World’s Increase

But visualize, for a moment, the entire population of the world saving 10% of their increase (or even 3% as some figure it) for the Feast of Tabernacles. That is a lot of money. Today’s businessmen would like to get their hands

We can see that the main instruction here is to take food—the tithe of what they produced—to the Feast with them

on that. But what God-fearing person wants to work at a motel or restaurant or gas station during the Feast? Every person would want to be spending the money they saved for the Feast. If they could not spend it, would they be keeping the Feast?

Even if we say that restaurant and motel people could work only part of the Feast or every other Feast, we still are dealing with impossibility. If everyone keeps the Feast and only a third of the people travel, more than every available restaurant and motel worker would be needed to take care of the crowds. Any rotation plan that would give most of these service workers some of the Feast “off” would further diminish the already completely inadequate resources. The only solution is to do something similar to what the Israelites did—we will cover that a little later.

What Does the Bible Say?

So how did the Church of God groups get into this kind of Feast-keeping that requires the services of lots of non-

Feast-keepers? First, they were a widely separated group gathered by a media outreach, not local preaching. So, nearly all of them had to travel a long way to come to a central location. For many, it was the only face-to-face fellowship they had. Secondly, they quoted Deut 24:24–26 which says that a tithe can be turned into money and taken to the Feast if the “journey be too long for you” and brethren can “spend that money for whatever your heart desires.” The scripture does say that, but we need to read it in its context:

“You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And **you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks**, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

But if the journey is too long for you, so that **you are not able to carry the tithe**, or if the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name is **too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you**, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: **for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires**; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and **you shall rejoice**, you and your household” (Deut 24:22–26).

We can see that the *main instruction* here is to take food—the tithe of what they produced—to the Feast with them. This obviously solved the problem of insufficient “Jerusalem restaurants” when the Feast was kept historically. Most people brought their food with them and were able to prepare it there. In the case of animals that were to be eaten, they had the extra advantage of being able to walk themselves to the Feast. Israelites living far from Jerusalem might take two to four days to travel to the Feast at a fast walk. Donkeys could be used to carry food as well as people not able to walk the whole way.

But God wanted everyone to keep the Feast, even if they did not have animals to carry their food. He told them to exchange their food (tithe) for money and then take their money to

the Feast. As long as most people brought lots of food to the Feast, a few people buying from them would not create a hardship. However, if nearly everybody brought money to the Feast and not food, either the cost of food would soar or it would simply be impossible to find—neither would help make a joyful Feast. It is important to see that the only type of item mentioned here as “tithe” is food, and that even when it is turned into money, **the only item mentioned to be purchased with the money is food.** Furthermore, these verses specifically mention buying “raw materials”. They do not say anything about paying for prepared meals, entertainment, etc.

Today, brethren go to the Feast in motor vehicles. Like the Israelites, even those who do not live near a Feast location can still probably journey there in 2–4 days. Would we be able to carry our food with us to the Feast? A lot of us probably could. We cannot expect to tie a cow behind our car and have it follow us to the Feast, but we do have a great variety of ways to carry food: coolers for refrigerated food, sleeping bags with dry ice for frozen food, dried food, canned goods, packaged food, etc. A few of us might not have the car space and would have to take money to buy food from others.

Also, Deuteronomy 24:24 talks about when the place “is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you”. This is clearly a reference to when the borders of Israel are expanded (Deut 12:20–21)—like they are today. If someone were riding a horse at a gallop for several days in order to go a long distance to the Feast, taking an 8-day food supply might be out of the question. Similarly, someone who is flying to the Feast today may not be able to carry eight days of food in their suitcase.

Simply put, most Church of God Feast-keeping has been nearly all “exception conditions”—bringing money to the Feast. The biblical rule—bringing food to the Feast—has been a rarely occurring exception. (A friend of mine once told of a farmer who brought meat, vegetables, preserves, etc. to the Feast—he found it strange.)

Why Did God Emphasize Food?

So why make such a big deal about

food? After all, “the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking” (Rom 14:17). Nevertheless, the name of the Holy Day is a “*Feast*”. There is a certain bonding that occurs when several families eat together—even more when they prepare the food together. When we do this, we are trusting a vital part of our life—what we eat—to others. We are learning to work together and please a variety of tastes. When everyone helps and everyone eats the same thing, every believer is important to every other believer—just as we are all important to God.

People who may have difficulty meeting and talking to others frequently do not have trouble working with

There is a certain bonding that occurs when several families eat together—even more when they prepare the food together

others. Tasks such as food preparation and clean-up provide enough work that people feel comfortable with others, but allow for conversation about worthwhile subjects.

Most exciting forms of entertainment do not lend themselves to conversation as well. There is too much going on to pay attention to and/or talk about. Restaurants tend to give people an elitist mentality: the customers are there to “order”, and the workers are there to “serve”. This is not exactly the Biblical concept of relying upon God to shelter us for seven days:

“During the seven festival days, all of you who are Israelites by birth must live in shelters. This will remind each new generation of Israelites that their ancestors had to live in shelters when I rescued them from the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God” (Lev 23:42–43, NLT)

Indeed, in many Church of God Feasts, the brethren spent two to three hours per day in a service together, then many hours being fed and entertained by “people of the world”.

We have shown how the whole world could feast at the Feast of

Tabernacles if the vast majority of people brought their own food, and prepared it together in appropriate size groups. But where would they live during the Feast of Tabernacles?

A Feast Without Motels

The answer to that is in the name: the Hebrew name *sukkah* means a small, makeshift shelter or dwelling. It is sometimes translated tabernacle, booth, shelter or tent. The word does not mean a miserable place, but it is a lesser class of building than the house we might normally live in. Clearly, during the Bible era, many people did literally stay in tents during the Feast of Tabernacles. Most of these people were not used to centrally-heated houses with running water, so going from their own house to a tent was not a big difference. Today, many people from western societies would have a very difficult time rejoicing at the Feast if they had to stay in a tent there. But they could stay in a heated cabin or certainly in a smaller dwelling than they are accustomed to and still learn the lesson of being sheltered by God when we are rescued from Egypt (symbolic of our own sin).

Zechariah 14:16–19 indicates that some people will come to Jerusalem to keep the Feast from many different nations. Yet, it would be impossible for the whole world to come there at once. The Feast will obviously be observed in many sites. Building appropriate shelter-type housing (could be heated with water, electricity, etc.) at those sites could be done in advance. Also, many families will probably acquire a “Feast tent” or maybe even a “recreational vehicle” or trailer. Neither one of these methods would require any motel-like staff. People would be responsible for setting up, maintaining and cleaning their own cabins, tents and trailers.

Vital Services During the Feast

While thinking about the future, somebody might ask, “Won’t some people always have to work at the Feast? Don’t we need electric power, fuel, water and emergency services? If a heater breaks down, will there be anyone to fix it?” These are good questions. But they have good answers. It does make sense to run utilities and

emergency services during the Feast. There are effective ways to do this requiring **very few** people. The majority of people who work for utility companies are involved in routine maintenance, accounting, planning etc. Only a small percentage are needed just to run the utilities. Current utility companies have these tiny crews working on Christmas and other holidays. Only essential functions are done on those days and a worker typically only has to work on one out of every 4 to 10 holidays. Similar scheduling has been used by Church of God groups to man other vital jobs at their feast sites. This is a much different situation than motels and restaurants that usually hire many more workers for longer hours during holidays.

The Chadron Feast Fits In

So how does the Chadron State Park Feast site fit into all of this?

Of all the Feasts that I have attended, this one is closest to fitting in with the kind of Feast that was held in ancient Israel, and that will be held in the future. While there is still a lot of room for improvement, it is accurate to say that nobody was “working full time” just serving the 77 people who attended the Feast at Chadron State Park in 2001. There were a few people who, as part of their job, spent a few hours per day helping us, but none were spending all of it for us.

The Feast was held in the beautiful wooded hills of northwest Nebraska. The landscape, birds, mammals and sunsets provided an on-going show without cost or human intervention. Most of the Feast-goers stayed in the cabins right at the park. The only daily service provided by the park was the pick up of towels each morning and the delivery of replacements. (This job could have easily been done by someone in our Feast group, but the Park was servicing other non-Feast guests and the Park probably would not want us to use their laundry facility). The Park staff also provided a hayride and “buffalo stew” meal for us one night, and rented paddle boats and fixed a few minor problems with cabins. That was about all. The people attending made their own beds, took out their own trash, and cleaned as necessary.

The facilities set-up was excellent.

The meeting hall and six cabins surrounded a grassy area that made a natural play yard for small children. Other cabins were located in more private settings, but still walking distance or a very short drive away. The meeting hall had space for 100 people, and over 60 were present for most of the meetings. Adjoining the hall was a large, completely equipped kitchen.

The vast majority of the Feast food was prepared at the Feast by those attending. Over half of the families present took up the task of being responsible for one of the evening meals. Most of the other brethren pitched in to help in various ways. Menus included American standards

Of all the Feasts that I have attended, this one is closest to fitting in with the kind of Feast that was held in ancient Israel, and that will be held in the future

such as chicken or steak and baked potatoes. We also had ethnic favorites such as spaghetti and then jambalaya prepared by Anne Nicolay of New Orleans. (I personally thought this was the best I had ever tasted.) A variety of hot and cold breakfasts and lunches were also prepared by the Feast-goers. (And rather than trashing the leftovers as many restaurants do, Feast-goers were quite happy to make sandwiches out of yesterday's baked chicken.)

We had originally planned to bring most of our food to the Feast, but the number of people who would be eating was uncertain right up until it was time to go. Also, I was not completely sure of exactly what we would need. As it turned out, I think God blessed my enthusiasm and covered for my ignorance by sending two people whose hard work made the Feast enjoyable. Some of the food was brought in advance, but Mary Laws (wife of Jerry Laws) went shopping nearly every day, and I can never remember lacking anything that we needed. Also, Steve Karasek, a food service professional, decided to come to our Feast just a few

weeks before it began. He managed breakfasts, and helped out at numerous other times—quietly and humbly telling us exactly what we needed to know.

A few people probably had to work too hard at this Feast, but I would like to sincerely thank them for their efforts. It would not have been as joyful for everyone without their efforts. A few may not have worked hard enough—they will learn in time. I certainly learned a lot, and will make an effort to better spread out the work in the future. Most of the brethren told me that they really enjoyed this Feast and the way everyone worked together. They would do it that way again.

More Than Feasting at Chadron

We did have teaching at this Feast. We read the book of Ecclesiastes with discussion from the congregation. There were also many messages and studies given by Norman Edwards, Jerry Laws and Leo Bredehoft. The Bredehoft and Edwards families also brought a lot of enjoyable special music and accompaniment for congregational singing. Many participated in the variety show and game nights.

One day during the Feast most brethren went to see Mount Rushmore. It was snowing heavily and the mountain had been closed, but the snow lifted enough for viewing while we were there. The melting water running down the men's faces made it look like they were crying or bleeding from a fight. It was a very appropriate backdrop to speak on the state of our nation today versus what the founding fathers had envisioned. If they could see our country today, they probably would be hurt and crying. After Mt. Rushmore, many brethren went to some commercial attractions and had dinner at a restaurant.

Conclusion

This article is **not** saying that it was or **is** a sin to eat in a restaurant or stay at a motel at the Feast. It **is** saying that anciently, most people brought and prepared their own food, and that this method will be used again when most of the world is keeping the Feast. This writer also believes that some lessons can be best learned by preparing meals together at the Feast. — NSE 📖

“Keeping the Feast in Jerusalem” from page 1

I went there to keep the Feast, with a small home fellowship group, who meet in the London area, England. We believed that the Eternal had placed His name there in Jerusalem for the Feast in 2001, and wanted us to celebrate there, so we went. This was not my first visit to Israel, I was there for the Feast in 1998, touring around Israel and Jordan with UCG. But for the rest of the group, it was their first visit, apart from one woman who had visited Jerusalem for a day while staying in Cyprus a few years ago.

Getting accommodation proved to be harder than expected. We initially booked a small bed and breakfast place, which our group of 12 was going to completely take over for nearly two weeks, in the west part of Jerusalem. However, due to the continuing violence since before the Feast in 2000, the owners decided to cancel our booking, as all their other guests (all from America) had cancelled, too fearful to go there. Instead they decided to lease the property to an American company for a year, which put us out of the picture.

So, after much prayer, we sought a new location to stay in, and found the Jaffa Gate Tourist Office in the Old City part of Jerusalem very helpful. They eventually found a place for us in the Knights' Palace Hotel, near the New Gate, inside the Old City. For those who do not know much of the layout of Jerusalem, let me explain a little. The Old City lies in the eastern part of Jerusalem, and was formerly part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, but was captured by the Israelis in 1967. Evidence of the war can still be seen at the Zion Gate, where the wall is full of bullet holes. To the east of the Old City is the West Bank, an Arab area, including the Mount of Olives. To the west is the modern part of the city, inhabited by Jews and Israeli Arabs, a modern bustling city of commerce and banks, shops and buses, busy streets and restaurants.

The Old City is surrounded by a wall built by the Turkish ruler Suleiman El Hakim over an ancient

Roman wall, in 1539. The Old City is split into four quarters: in the north-west is the Christian Quarter, (where we stayed), mostly inhabited by Arabs, containing a lot of Catholic places. In the south-west is the Armenian Quarter, to the north-east is the Arab Quarter and to the south-east is the Jewish Quarter. The Temple Mount is in the Arab Quarter, but close to the Jewish Quarter, situated at the eastern edge of the Old City, with the Mount



The Garden Tomb, Jerusalem

of Olives overlooking it from the east.

Our hotel was very unusual—an old monastery converted into a hotel, from the times of the Crusades in the Middle Ages. The rooms were nice and modern inside, and the hallways had monastic arches, stone floors, and thick stone walls. This made it the ideal hotel to stay in, as the heat outside was very great in the afternoon (maximum temperatures we experienced were around 43 degrees Celsius, but averaged around 32°C most days), but the hotel's thick stone walls and small windows meant it stayed very cool and comfortable inside.

We held services inside the hotel, either in one of our rooms, or in a meeting room which the hotel staff said we could use (at no extra charge). Normally this hotel would have been packed with guests at this time, but tourism to Jerusalem has suffered greatly over the past year, with only a fraction of the normal tourist trade. So the hotel was mainly empty most of the time, except for about three days when two large groups stayed there; I think they were Catholic groups from France and Germany. But most of the time we had exclusive use of the bar lounge and dining hall.

At our services we studied scriptures relating to walking in the truth, the armour of God, speaking rightly

and not offending others (especially when in a foreign country where the locals might take offense at a careless word), God watching over us, and for us to involve the children more in our services and worship of God. We had three children with us and concluded that we had at times been neglecting them at services and should do more to include them and make services enjoyable for the young ones.

Any visit to Jerusalem is incomplete without visiting some of the historical and biblical sites. The Garden Tomb, which consists of a garden and a tomb where it is believed that Christ's body lay for three days, was very peaceful and a beautiful place to visit. Although there is no absolute proof at this time if this is the actual tomb of Christ, nearby, at the end of the garden, we could look over the fence and see Golgotha—the place of the skull, where Christ was crucified, which is a rock face with hollows and shapes that seem to make a large skull. However, it had partly eroded but postcards from the garden shop showed it used to look more like a skull.

The Mount of Olives gives a magnificent view over the Old City. The western slope is covered in graves, where the richest Jews are buried, believing that they will be resurrected when the Messiah returns there. At the foot of the mount are three tombs of some of King David's sons, now mostly in ruins, and the Church of All Nations next to the Garden of Gethsemane. The walk up the mount was steep and tiring, but we made it okay, if a bit slowly. A local Arab tried to sell us a ride on the “Jesus Taxi”—i.e. a donkey, but we declined. The valley that runs between this and the Old City, the Kidron Valley, leads down southwards past the site of the old City of David, now built up with Arab housing. Unfortunately, the inhabitants are in the habit of throwing their rubbish down into the valley, and we saw there piles of rubbish including rusting cars, old fridges, appliances, almost anything.

We took a walk down this valley one day to reach the Pool of Siloam at the bottom. This was the most nerve-racking experience of the whole trip. As we drew closer to where the pool was, a number of local Arabs came down towards us from all directions.

They did us no harm, but I think they could have quite easily robbed us, although I do not know what their



The Kidron Valley, Jerusalem

intentions were. I think that God protected us and kept them at a distance. There was also an Arab boy who walked with us, he had keys in his hand and was asking us if we wanted to see the pool. He, and two men, led us to the pool and opened the locked gate. Normally it would be open all the time, but with the tourist trade so bad places are often closed.

They let us in for a few Shekels. We walked down the old stairs to the pool, where it was cool and peaceful. The water was cool and looked clean, and the Arab man who went down with us told us about the place, how Jesus had healed a blind man here. The boy sat on the side, while we dipped our feet in the water. We offered him money, 10 Shekels (about \$2.50) but he refused. This was the first Arab we had seen refuse money. This boy was very well behaved and we felt safe with him.

In Israel the local currency is the Shekel, and there are about 4 Shekels to one American Dollar, 6 Shekels to one British Pound. Although all major world currencies are legal tender here, mostly people liked to be paid in Shekels or US Dollars, so I took plenty of each of those currencies.

Shopping in the Old City is a new experience. Nothing has a set price. There are numerous streets which form the market, very narrow, very old, and with steps up or down everywhere. The shops are very small too, and each shop usually has an Arab in the doorway begging tourists to go into his shop to buy something. With very few tourists, they were desperate for our custom. The goods on sale are varied—lots of intricate ornaments, brightly coloured clothing, a lot of

beautiful and interesting items. I managed to get a few items, haggling on price. I was surprised at how well I managed it, being a total newcomer to that form of trade. But we were advised by the hotel staff how to do it; whatever the shopkeeper says is the price, you should offer half, and then he will bring the price down and you keep haggling until you get a price that is mutually agreeable.

We also visited Mount Zion, the place where King David is apparently buried. So much has been built over everything that was there in the Old and New Testament times, it is impossible to say where anything from ancient times is now. But there is a place which is believed to be directly above his tomb, where Jews go to pray, and the local guides like to take tourist's money and talk about it.

During our stay we walked around most of the Old City, except the Jewish Quarter. It seemed safe enough there, except in crowds and where it was busy. But no bombs or real trouble. We were warned by the hotel staff not to go there in the mid to late afternoon as this is when most pickpockets operate (preying on tired hot tourists).

The new city is quite different, and



At the Pool of Siloam, Jerusalem

also worth seeing. A bomb did go off in the new city during our stay, but that day we were in the Old City, and saw it on the news. It was away from any area we subsequently visited.

The Dead Sea is a few miles away (its northern end where the River Jordan flows into it). One of the hotel staff arranged a trip there, hiring a small van with driver, for a good price (he did not want us to get ripped off). He also got some food from Arab shops cheaply (everything is cheaper for local Arabs than for tourists) for us, and we went off to the Dead Sea. This

is the sea that is full of salt, where people can float. Be careful not to get it in your eyes. It is also the lowest point on the Earth's surface, about 400 metres below sea level. Our group included three children who all loved going in the swimming pool that was also there. It was a relaxing day.

The hotel staff where we stayed were very helpful and friendly. They were Palestinians, but certainly nothing like the violent ones you see on television. One said he lives in the mountains near Ramallah, but it is impossible at the moment for us to go there because of the troubles. He said we are welcome to return some time in the future when things are quieter, to visit his home and his family, and also to visit his relatives in Jordan. Another staff member took us to his sister's home in Jerusalem (he himself lived further north and had quite a journey to get to work), and we enjoyed some Arab hospitality. Their home was small, just one room with bathroom and kitchen, and their main room seemed quite small. Father, mother and three children lived there. They seemed happy enough and their rent was cheap. However, education there is very expensive, especially considering how little they earn compared to British or American workers.

We saw on television the Americans starting to bomb Afghanistan during the Feast. A few hours earlier that day we had heard the sound of supersonic jets flying past, but we could not see them, nor were sure exactly how far away they were. We had news from the BBC on the TV, and sometimes saw some Arabic news.

The police have a strong presence in Jerusalem, especially around and just outside the Old City. On the day when a group of religious zealots annually try to lay a stone to start building a new temple the police were out in force. Some look like regular police, but some wear military uniforms. All carry guns, mostly M16s. They made the place feel safe, in that no one would dare cause trouble with them around.

We saw no trouble there, nothing bad happened to us, and we had an enjoyable Feast time. Worth visiting, when the time is right and the troubles stop. 📖



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

To avoid any difficulty, writers should specify how much of their name and address they would like us to print.

The Journal and the Place of Safety

LETTER: September 20, 2001
Dear Sir,

May I request the literature: *The Journal—News of the Churches of God*. May I request also the topics which pertain to the place of safety and 144,000.

Thanks.

Sincerely,

— Herbert Laureta, Philippines

RESPONSE: We mail out sample copies of *The Journal* so people can decide if they want to subscribe, but we do not want to bypass *The Journal's* normal subscription mechanism. You may subscribe directly to *The Journal* at the international price of \$14 for 6 issues, or \$24 for 12 issues. Contact: *The Journal—News of the Churches Of God*, PO Box 1020, Big Sandy, TX 75755. Tel: 903-636-9974 fax: 903-636-9965; e-mail: info@thejournal.org.

We do not have any literature specifically on “the place of safety” or the 144,000; though we may have covered some aspects of it in answers to letters in *Servants' News*. The Bible does mention protection for believers (Rev 12; 14; 3:10; Luke 21:36; Mal 3:17; Ezk 34:12; Is 26:20–21). It also mentions a group of 144,000 (Rev 7; 14). I appreciate your desire to understand these scriptures, but I feel I must warn you of the long history of groups that claim to understand these scriptures and obviously did not.

Do we find commands in the Bible that tell us we must understand the meaning of these or at least find a group that claims to know how we can go to the “place of safety” or be one of the 144,000? I cannot. But I have faith that God will manage these issues in perfect fairness and wisdom—and reveal them to me if I need to know them.

I believe many church organizations find that they get more response to their broadcasts and booklets when they cover prophetic subjects, so they believe that God wants them to teach prophecy. Indeed, some may even have visions or dreams telling them what prophecy to teach. Unfortunately, other groups may simply find that they receive a lot more money from prophetic broadcasts and literature. Individuals are drawn to prophecy partly because they seek knowledge of God and partly because they want to escape trials by being a part of a group that understands these prophecies and knows how to be “protected”.

I appreciate the sincere ones, and disagree with the ones who are preaching prophecy for money—God knows which is which. Nevertheless, I prefer to follow the words of Jesus directly:

“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matt 24:34–36).

Yet one can find hundreds of prophecy books and web sites that claim to know the exact day.

“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt 24:37–39).

How could a lot of people know nothing about His coming if the exact prophetic scenario has been published on

the worldwide web or in major books and magazines?

“Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left” (Matt 24:40–41).

Notice that the people “taken” were mixed in with others who were not “taken”—they were not all in the same church organization or all following the “right” prophecy teacher.

“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matt 24:42).

He repeats again, “you do not know”, yet thousands of teachers say, “we know”.

“But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt 24:43–44).

People read the above verses and say: “Right, we don’t want to be caught off guard! We are going to watch world events and study prophecy so that we know when He returns!” but that is not what Jesus advised. Here is what He said to do:

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that

servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 24:45-51).

The message is that we are all to be feeding God's household—feeding them with the spiritual food that they need at the time. This is a very broad assignment. Many other references in Scripture talk about spiritual gifts, and how one serves those in and outside the church. Unfortunately, some people do not believe in prophecy at all, so they have no idea that Jesus may be returning. But even some who preach prophecy do the things that Christ said not to do—fight other groups that have a different prophetic or doctrinal understanding. Others become personally sinful, or stagger back and forth, going from one prophetic interpretation to another, and from this doctrine to another. We can find more detail about how to act here:

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels (Luke 9:23-26).

It is unfortunate that some people who are very soon expecting the "Great Tribulation" and return of Christ are very careful to try to keep their names from turning up on the Internet, in the press or on any government documents that might identify themselves as Bible-believing Christians. They are concerned that the government, New World Order or some mega-church group will persecute them because of it. And maybe they will. But we should not think that we know more than Christ! We should not think that we can figure out His prophecies and know when the end is and cleverly avoid all of the trouble! We should not be ashamed of Him, we should not be worried about preserving our life, and

we should trust Him and do what He says.

"Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife.

Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left" (Luke 17:30-36).

In the above scenario, the believers obviously had divine revelation that it was time to flee, but no advance warning—not even time to come down from their roof to get food or a coat. They did not have it all spelled out on a prophecy chart with a backpack ready and waiting on the roof. But they were not afraid of losing their life for Christ. This is the message that needs to be taught.

I am not opposed to studying prophecy and asking God for understanding. But I think that believers today are placing far too much emphasis on understanding prophecy for themselves and not doing enough to feed others, using their spiritual gifts. That is why I emphasize this message. The above verses are not an interpretation on my part, but what Christ said when he was asked about what we should do when it looks like the end might come. Many other verses say similar things.

May the Eternal bless you in your serving and studies.

— NSE

Appreciates Servants' News

LETTER: August 8, 2001

Dear Norm,

I am thankful for the good sense and devotion to God's Word that exemplifies your ministry. I believe that producing non-denominational literature that encourages people to read and study God's Word for themselves, literature that increases the knowledge of, regard and respect for, and understanding of

God's Word is a worthwhile goal for your ministry. I am reminded that in the book of Acts "success" for the early ekklesia was defined, first of all, in these terms: "the word of God increased" (Acts 6:7). That is the important thing.

Your e-mail links didn't work for me. Glad to have the hard copy.

Best regards,

— Jeffrey A. Caldwell, California

RESPONSE: Thank you for the encouragement. The Bible paints people's actions far more in terms of "good and evil" than it does in specific methods or doctrines.

Due to problems with an Internet router, a few people were not able to access my website (including me for a while). If anyone was having trouble with e-mail, and would like to try it again, I would be glad to do so. But if having the hard-copy makes it more likely that you will read it, then I want to send the hard copy.

— NSE

Truth Heard If We Speak It

LETTER: August 31, 2000

Brother Edwards,

I read your article about eternal judgment. So very informative and scripturally based. Just today I considered some of your thought with a radio station announcer who asked me questions. He was concerned about when a Christian would "go to heaven" and the statement by the Savior to the thief on the cross that this robber, because of his faith, that this man would "be with (Him) in Paradise." I explained the misplaced comma. This man, like some of the men written about in "Truckers' Bible Study", was eager for Gospel Truth.

— Joseph McGuire, Georgia

RESPONSE: Groups that have large, centralized evangelism usually tell their members that "people don't want to hear the truth from them". But once we start talking, it is amazing how many will listen to a kind and respectful believer.

— NSE

Evaluating Other's Teachings

LETTER: June, 2001

Dear Sir,

I write this letter in the hope that we may

be of some help to you and your congregation. We have been members of God's church for 22 years and have over the past few years come to see some very important knowledge which is vital for the end time people of God on whom the ends of the age have come.

We have sent an article which we hope you will be happy to share with your congregation. We have a website which is :

www.endtimeknowledge.com

We also have an e-mail address:

endtimeknowledge@iprimus.com.au

At the website there are many articles which contain new knowledge which has been revealed by God. They are not our ideas or views, they are God's revealed knowledge.

I would like to ask the following questions and if you are interested in the answers please visit our website or contact us by e-mail.

[1] Is Christ the born Son of God before creation?

[2] What is the correct night to keep the Passover?

[3] Should the Wave Sheaf be kept today, and why was it not kept till the promised Land was reached?

[4] When we are called, when will we be chosen and what do we have to do to qualify to be faithful, crossing the Jordan River, and entering the promised Land, has an amazing parallel for our spiritual journey to Eternal Life. What is it?

[5] Who is the God of the Old Testament?

[6] Are we now the Laodicean Era?

[7] Why is there almost no knowledge of God the Father.

We hope that you will find the above questions compelling. God has revealed the answers to these questions and many more, in these last days. This is new end time knowledge for Gods people, it is to be shared with any one who has ears to hear.

We are happy to receive your comments and look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

—Jim McGinn and Peta McGinn
5 Cedar Court
Brightview, QLD 4311
AUSTRALIA

RESPONSE: I looked at the website and found some of the articles very helpful. Some consisted mostly of scriptures. Putting multiple scriptures on one subject, and explaining how you think they relate is always very useful. I appreciate

your desire to go just by the scriptures and not by the ideas of men. Also, it is always an inspiration to see someone focused on the things of God rather than the things of the world.

What I do not understand is why you make such an effort to claim that these things were "revealed" to you. Although you say you are not trying to collect a following, the website heading "End Time Knowledge Revealed" makes it sound like you have a "special" relationship to God. **If** you are sure that God is revealing these things only to you, then should not every serious believer come to you to learn?

All of the scriptures that you quoted have been read by thousands of other believers and at least some others have put them together in a manner very similar to the way you put them together. There are places where you say that these things have not been known "until now", and I have read them in articles that are decades old. This is especially true when it comes to writings on "God the Father".

I think everyone who teaches from the Bible should pray that God will reveal truth to him or her. I do that and I believe God has specifically shown me things at times. On the other hand, I have also occasionally written something that I had prayed about and thought was right, and then later on found additional scriptures that changed my understanding.

How can any of your readers know for sure that your information is "revealed" by God? Many of the old Testament prophets described a vision, dream or angel who spoke to them. The Apostles of the New Testament were taught directly by Christ. There were other prophets in the New Testament who had a track record of being correct. These told us how their messages were revealed. I am not saying that God did not reveal these things to you, but if He did, I would like to know how. I receive many articles and letters claiming revelations of God, the writers use only the Scriptures as their source, but they do not agree with each other.

While some of your papers seem completely based on the Bible, your paper on the Laodicean Era started out quoting Herbert Armstrong—who did not have a very good prophetic track record. As you know, the expression

"Laodicean Era" never appears in any commonly used Bible. Jesus Christ, in Revelation 2 and 3 actually commands everyone to listen to all of the messages to the churches. There are not many times in the Bible when Christ repeats himself seven times—I think it would be very important to listen to all the church messages, not to assign messages to "eras".

I want to encourage you to continue to study and to share your teaching with others on your website. I hope that the Internet will someday have hundreds of thousands of independent sites where Bible information is taught and discussed. But we all need to realize that the work of God is greater than what any one man is doing—even if that man is (or was) the head of a huge church organization. We should mightily seek God's will and try to faithfully teach from the Scriptures. But then we should realize that we are not perfect and that it is possible that we can make mistakes—and be willing to let our brother come to us and show us our mistakes.

Thank you for your letter and your hard work on your web site.

— NSE

Bible Hymnal Available on CD?

LETTER:

August 12, 2001

Hello Norman

Many Thanks for the latest copy of *The Servant's News*, and please keep us on your mailing list.

On another matter, we have a request to make: Would you know of anyone, or any group, who has put the the complete **Purple Hymnal** onto CD or audio cassettes as Choral music? We did receive, some few years ago now, a couple of CDs from the Philadelphia Church of God, but there are at least fifty one hymns missing—they are just not on the CDs. Our group here would like to obtain something that has **all** the hymns on. If you can help in any way, please let us know.

Thanking you

Sincerely,

— Mike & Helen Carboni, South Africa

RESPONSE: I have a copy of the Choral version which is probably similar to the PCG version you have. It stops at hymn 122. There is a piano version available on this website that includes all of

Finding a Job and Tithing

the songs: www.herbertwarmstrong.org. Another source of information for Church of God music is www.cgmusic.com. They have a number of the Scottish Psalters that Dwight Armstrong borrowed from.

I encourage the use of CDs, hymnals and whatever else is needed for a group to be able to praise God together. But if a group hopes to continue into the future—especially if it has young people—it should eventually find a hymnal that is still available somewhere for purchase.

— NSE

Glad to Share SN Articles

LETTER: August 12, 2001

Hello, I am from the Church of God Sabbath Day, in Hope, AR. I maintain our web site at www.TheChurchInHope.com. I have copied an article that you print and I have posted it on our website. If you would rather I not do this, then I will delete it. But if it is OK with you, I will make it one of the articles we have listed on our home page. Thanks,

— Cindy

SpeerCindy@thechurchinhope.com
www.geocities.com/thechurchinhope/liveagain

RESPONSE: Thank you for asking, but it is fine that you put my article out there. I looked at your website and see the purpose in what you are doing. You are not including names of anyone, but just putting out sound Bible articles. There are a few I would have some disagreement with, but I have disagreement with some of my own writings of seven years ago. Nevertheless, the overwhelming influence of your web site is positive and pleasant and true, and I pray that the Eternal will use it to help many people.

You may use any of my articles on your site. I hoped to create a similar site, but I have not had time to do it. I still might in the future, but I will gladly send you files of anything that you would like now. (Much of what I have written is either too long, or too COG-specific for your site, but there are probably some that you would find helpful.)

I have attached our literature list and index with this post.

— NSE

LETTER:

August 9, 2001

Hello Norm,

[Literature request omitted.]

Norm, do you have any perspectives on tithing at this point in time? I am utterly confused by the different perspectives on it and what the Bible appears to be saying compared to what WCG and the splinters have taught. Seems like I received few blessings when tithing or not tithing. This used to be considered the measuring stick for righteousness when I first came into this sabbath community in about 1984.

Do you have any philosophy about ongoing financial problems some people experience even when they have properly prepared for the work force? I'm talking about professional careers not like general labor jobs. Seems like the church as a whole is more blue collar than white collar, which is fine, but I'm finding a huge lack of empathy and severe criticism/judgment from brethren regarding my husband's unemployment plight and my underemployment plight. I currently work as an instructor part-time at two community colleges: full time is not available (I have a Masters' Degree).

Thanks

— June Narber, North Carolina

RESPONSE: I can understand the confusion about blessings for tithing. The Church of God groups frequently taught that tithing produced blessings and they would cite letters written by people who had tithed and then been blessed. What they usually did not say, is that they also received letters from people who tithed and went deeply in debt—even bankrupt. They also received letters from people who were on low, fixed incomes and suffered greatly. These latter letters were rarely ever published.

These examples of people who “tithed and were blessed” are no better than the many product testimonials that one sees in TV and print advertising. If 1,000 people try a product, 10 people may experience fantastic results—which may be coincidence and nothing to do with using the product. But if these people write positive letters and the company publishes them—ignoring hundreds of other negative letters, their advertising will sound like the product is wonderful. The Church of God tithing testimonials are very much the same. They do not give any kind of accurate picture of how

many people were blessed/cursed depending upon whether they tithed or did not. We simply do not know what percentage of positive versus negative letters were received, and we do not know what percentage of people in the “blessed” and “cursed” categories decided to write. A Church of God member who wrote that tithing failed to produce prosperity for him or her certainly ran the risk of being disfellowshipped.

Does the Bible teach that wealth is the measuring stick for righteousness? Answering that question is better than reading selected testimonials. There are many promises in the Old Testament of wealth and blessings to those who obey God. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are two important chapters. Malachi 3:7–12 is one of many scriptures that promises a blessing for tithing. Faithful men such as Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David and others achieved great wealth. On the other hand, prophets who devoted their lives to God were sometimes quite poor. A group of crowded prophets had to borrow an ax to build a log cabin for themselves (2Kngs 6:1–5). The issue is summed up even more pointedly here:

“They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb 11:37–38).

This same concept of suffering for righteousness' sake is taught throughout the New Testament (Matt 5:10–12; 10:18–22; Acts 5:41; 2Cor 12:10; Phil 1:19–20; Jms 1:12; 1Pet 3:14; 1Pet 4:13–16). It is specifically compared to the prophets: “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets” (Luke 6:23). It is important to be sure that we really are suffering *for righteousness' sake*, not because of our own faults (1Pet 2:19–20). Asking God and trusted friends to show us our faults can be helpful.

But even if we are following God in the way that we should, there is still no clear statement that we will become financially well-off. The New Testament neither holds up riches nor poverty as a

sign of righteousness. It does indicate that possessions can take people away from God (Matt 19:21–22). However, other scriptures clearly show that financially able believers used their wealth to help others in a variety of ways (Matt 26:9–12; Mark 15:43 Luke 3:11; 8:3; 1Tim 5:10; 1Jn 3:17). Yet the Bible also indicates that becoming wealthy was not a goal in the Christian life of itself:

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matt 6:19–20).

“You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions” (Heb 10:34, NIV).

“Useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. Now godliness with contentment is great gain” (1Tim 6:5–6).

Where does tithing fit into all of this?

The New Testament affirms that tithing continued—to Levites (Matt 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12). It **does not teach that tithing transferred to the “ministry”**. I am including my paper, *How Do We Give to the Eternal?* which shows the error of the common Church of God teaching that Hebrews 7:1–14 transfers the tithe from the Levites to the “ministry”. The New Testament clearly teaches that all believers are priests, not just the “ministry” (1Pet 2:5, 9). Except for the scriptures mentioned in this paragraph, there are no other references to tithing in the New Testament. Yet there are numerous references to **collection of offerings** to support Bible teachers and to help the poor.

The Jews would have strongly opposed anyone who taught tithing to non-Levites (Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin), who taught Gentiles to tithe, or who taught the need to tithe outside the land of Israel. All of these things would have been changes from the teaching of the Old Testament as they understood it. Yet neither the Bible nor

secular history records anything about this. Tithes were not collected by “the church”—what was becoming the Catholic church—until the late 300s A.D.

In the Church of God groups, the major function of the members was to fund the preaching of the Gospel and the paid ministry. Tithing was taught extensively and in many cases required (people were disfellowshipped for non-tithing).

A wealthy member tithed a lot more than a poor one, so **great emphasis was placed on the scriptures that equated prosperity with righteousness**. Indeed, wealthy people were frequently selected for deacon and local elder positions—both to hold them up as examples to the poorer members and to help assure the allegiance of major contributors. The Church of God groups largely did not understand that God gives a variety of spiritual gifts to the believers (1Cor 12–14; Eph 4:11–15; Rom 12:6–8; 1Pet 4:8–11). Therefore, they did not read the many scriptures about brethren who gave up the pursuit of wealth for more important goals of serving, teaching or helping others in various ways.

I realize that you and your husband worked hard to physically prepare for good careers. But you must certainly be aware that “over-qualification” is quite a problem in the professional job market. I have talked to people who have occupied a very top job in a major company, left it for a good reason, and found that no smaller company will hire them, not because they cannot do the work, but because they are afraid that the person will leave as soon as another job with a “big company” opens up for them. Some of these people search for jobs for years, and then nobody will hire them because they have been “out of a job too long”. Many end up getting “temporary” work in a completely different field and gradually build that into a career.

But you can rejoice. God may have something even more important in mind for you: “And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?” (Heb 12:5,

NIV). At times, we all have to ask God, “What do you want me to do?” and let Him show us.

At one time, I thought I would live out my life programming and designing systems for big mainframe computers—eventually growing into very-large scale project management. I was investing in real estate and hoped to have enough money coming in to buy whatever I wanted. Today, I write a couple of newsletters and serve God in other ways, and take care of my family by buying a lot of used things at low prices and fixing them as necessary. My family and I have not always been happy with the results. It has taken a while, but I have learned to live at peace with this because I believe that nobody else is doing exactly what I am doing and I believe God wants me to do it.

These trials are more difficult when they are not understood by fellow believers. Some laborers despise “knowledge workers”. Some “knowledge workers” despise laborers. The truth of the matter is that all kinds of workers are necessary to make our civilization work effectively. Just as laborers may not have the education to do some jobs, educated workers may not have the strength, patience or endurance to do other jobs. “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Phil 2:3). Everyone should be willing to help others in need when we can, but we should also be willing to go without things in order to make ends meet. People really can live without cable TV, air conditioning, restaurant meals, new clothes and appliances, etc., etc.

When Christ walked the earth as a man, he talked to the rich and the poor. He judged them by their character, not by their possessions. When I have spoken to others with job difficulties, I have encouraged these five things:

1. Ask God to show you what He would like you to do. Be prepared for something unexpected.

2. Ask yourself how you can best serve God. Some people go to great extent to plan their careers, house purchases, car purchases, etc., but spend only a few minutes thinking out how they will serve God in their lives.

3. Be diligent to look for and apply for available jobs that fit the results of the above—even if they do not bring as

much money as some other job might.

4. Use extra time (due to not having a job) productively. It is very easy for people without a job to drift into time-passing: watching TV, reading books of limited value, playing games, etc. People seem to be vulnerable to drinking, smoking, drugs, pornography and other addictions during uncertain times in their lives. Time-wasting and addictions are things that really degrade a person's self-worth. If he or she can set goals and achieve them, even though they do not produce money right now, he or she can maintain dignity and a sense of accomplishment. They will be able to say "I did these things" during that time that I did not have a job. Extra time should be used to:

- a) save money (doing work that you might otherwise hire out, searching for used things at a discount)
- b) prepare for a possible job (education, training, practical experience working for free)
- c) work on something that **might** become a job (write a book, invent something, clean someone's carpets with rented equipment, etc.)
- d) serve others (either personally or as part of a volunteer program)

One must be careful that one's efforts to effectively use extra time do not become a hindrance. Going to school, writing a book or serving others can consume a lot of badly needed money. They can also consume all of a person's time so that points 1, 2, 3, 4a and 4b become lost. Work-substitutes are better than depression or addictions, but they should not be used as an escape to prevent a person from facing the reality of needing to provide for oneself and one's family.

5. Share your situation with other believers. They may be able to help you better see yourself as others do, and they may be able to help you see what God would have you do. In addition, most good jobs are not advertised, but found through friends or other workers. The code sections governing the process of "fairly treating" all who apply for an advertised job are extensive and difficult. Many companies would rather interview several friends or even "friends of friends" of their own workers and hire the best one, than have to interview everyone who responds to an ad, and then prove that they are not discrim-

inating in any way against the ones whom they did not hire.

In general, the Bible teaches the need to work, but not the need to be wealthy:

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim 5:8).

And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

May God show you what he has in mind for you at this difficult time, and may you have the courage to receive it.

— NSE

Personal Lifestyle Important; MLMs and Success Motivation

LETTER:

December 3, 2000

Dear Norman,

In regards to your *Local Servants Directory*, I have enclosed the form. It may or may not be the type of thing you are looking for.

Since the Worldwide Church of God did a 180 degree turnaround on their doctrinal positions, I have done a lot of independent Bible study and analysis. Doctrinally, I still agree with most of the original WCG doctrines, but I don't agree on their administration of the same. I have also come to believe that **the Christian lifestyle has more bearing on salvation than doctrinal issues**. For instance, I still believe in the Sabbath, but I no longer believe that New Testament Christians have the same legalistic restrictions that were in the Old Testament. I also no longer believe that God works only with Sabbath keepers.

In the last few years I have done considerable review of doctrinal issues and have studied success literature. My belief is, that as a Christian, my responsibility in this life is to develop whatever talents God has given me to prepare for rulership with Christ. I am to improve my talents and abilities to the best of my ability while living the proper Christian lifestyle. I am to represent Christ primarily through my example, and to provide an answer to those who are attracted to me by my lifestyle.

I have put together a package on Christian success. I have given a couple of presentations on this topic at David Antion's feast site in California. I am also in the

process of setting up a website to make this information available to any Christian, whether they are Sabbath keepers or not. The site is: www.successthroughchrist.com

I expect to have the site up and running within the next 30 to 60 days [It is working].

As explained above, my focus is on personal lifestyle in the context of my doctrinal beliefs. I have yet to find any group that has a significant focus on self-improvement and developing future leaders. All that I am familiar with are primarily focused on doctrinal issues.

The intent of my website is to offer assistance to any practicing Christian who wants to improve themselves regardless of their doctrinal position.

If that falls within the context of what you are offering, please include me in your directory.

— Daryl Houck, Texas

RESPONSE: I agree that the Bible seems to indicate that what we do with our lives is more important than how much we know. I have often envisioned two men standing before Christ in the Judgment. (It probably will not work exactly this way, but this is just my imagination.)

Christ asks the first man, "What did you do with the abilities that I gave you?" This man would say, "I kept the ten commandments, the Sabbath, Holy Days, clean meats and all of the other Biblical laws. I studied prophecy and the deep spiritual analogies of the Bible." The man continues on for hours expounding his knowledge. Christ finally asks him, "So how did this knowledge help you serve others?" The man replies, "I would have taught what I knew if someone asked me, but you know that the unconverted people of the world just are not interested in spiritual things. I stayed away from them so I wouldn't be tempted to sin." So Christ answers, "You have taken care of yourself well, but now you must learn to love your neighbor as yourself. You will be ready for the Kingdom soon."

Christ then asks the second man, "What did you do with the abilities that I gave you?" This second man says: "I heard the last man talking and I am sorry, I just did not study the Bible enough to learn the many things that he knew. As a teen, I spent weekends and summers building houses for the poor. Then I went to evangelism school and conducted Bible studies on campus during my col-

lege years. After I got married, I joined a mentoring program for inner-city kids and it seems that it always pre-occupied our lives. Half the time, we had one of more of those children living with us. After our children left home, my wife and I went to serve at a mission in South America. I had always hoped to have more time to dig into some doctrinal questions that had been in the back of my mind, but I never did it." Christ answered, "you have learned to love your neighbor, and you obeyed the doctrine that you knew. An angel will teach you the other things that you need to know. You will be ready for the Kingdom before that first man."

I repeat, this is mostly my imagination working, but it is based upon Matthew 21:31: "Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God **before** you.'" I mentioned this story because it seems to illustrate your understanding of how God judges us, with which I agree.

However, after reading your website, I am not sure that the way you are going about this is the best. Your site is primarily about the use of Multi-Level Marketing and "success motivation literature". Your writing indicates that you know these things can be misused, but that you desire to do it in a Christian way. That is good. Since your website did not describe the programs in detail, I will just generally give what I believe are correct "golden rule" guidelines for these types of things.

First, let me explain exactly what is wrong with the classic "pyramid" scheme. In the simplest form, a person receives a letter asking him to send one dollar to a name on the top of the list. Then he adds his name to the bottom of the list and sends out 10 copies of the letter. Those people each send out 10 copies, making a total of 100 in circulation, then they each send 10 copies making a total of 1,000 in circulation, by which time our original letter writer should be at the top of the list, and should receive \$1 from 1,000 people, or \$1,000. Of course, the amount of money, the number of letter copies and the number of levels on a list all vary with different schemes. It sounds great. But if a person paid \$1 and actually received \$1,000, there would be 999 people who paid \$1 and got nothing. What if the

pyramid scheme kept going until they all got \$1,000? Then there would be 999,000 people who each paid a dollar and got nothing. If we imagine this pyramid scheme cycling through to two more levels, we would quickly exhaust the population of the world—there would be nobody left to pay those dollars.

The truth is, **pyramid schemes produce nothing useful and for everyone who gets a dollar somebody else loses a dollar.** The pyramid letters never say that. They are lying and stealing; Christians should not be involved with this.

(By the way, most of the people who make big money with pyramid schemes do **not** follow the rules on the letter that they mail out: they put their own name and names of friends in **all** of the places in the list and send out thousands of copies. That way, they will get **all** of the money that is sent for the next 3 copyings of the letter—assuming people ignorantly follow the letter's rules.)

As your web site implies, some bad MLMs (Multi-Level Marketing organizations) are little more than pyramid schemes. New people make a payment to join and a certain part of that payment goes to the person who "signed him up". (Another part of the payment may go to the one who "signed up" the one who "signed up" the new person.) New people are also encouraged to "sign up" yet other new people and collect "sign up bonuses". People who sign up lots of people (who sign up lots more people) make a lot of money whether anybody sells any of the product or not. This works essentially the same as the pyramid scheme. For every person who gets rich by collecting "sign up" bonuses, there are hundreds of others who will pay "sign up" fees and receive nothing.

I was glad to see you state that the MLMs you work with pay money out of actual sales of products, not "sign up" fees. This is essential. But I would like to go further and state that **the only MLM in which a believer should participate is one where working as a salesman is profitable—without "signing up" anybody.** Why? Because just like the pyramid scheme we discussed, **most** of the people in an MLM will be at the bottom—having never signed up anyone. If a person cannot make a decent wage only by selling the product, then it is cer-

tainly wrong for a few people to get rich at the expense of others who are suffering. Most MLM promotional material insists that prospective new recruits will be able to sign up numerous people under them in just a few months or years. Most do not tell the truth: at any given moment, most of the people in their organization have **nobody** "signed up" underneath them.

MLMs make the most sense for unusual products that require a lot of teaching and education and maybe installation (e.g. energy efficient appliances, water softeners and filters, exercise equipment, etc.) They cannot possibly be as efficient as a discount department store for common items everyone buys.

Finally, let me speak about "success motivation literature". I have read several books of this nature and it is usually a mixture of four things:

1. Encouragement to work hard and stick to a job—the Bible teaches this.
2. Encouragement to improve one's skill for a job—learning from others how to achieve success. Again, very good.
3. Encouragement to make long-range plans for the future. These are good as long as they do not crowd out one's plans to serve God or one's family. Planning to "be a millionaire before one is 40" is probably not a good goal unless it also includes something like "while serving in a church program every other weekend and spending two nights per week with my family."

4. Encouraging a desire to succeed no matter what. While much success literature does not openly advocate unbiblical or unethical behavior, it frequently does little to encourage its readers to think about what God would want.

This writer has seen many people alienate themselves from nearly all of their friends and family by trying to make money from a scheme that was legal, but not beneficial to anybody. If a product or service is not worth selling, getting salesmen all psyched up to become wealthy by selling it is a recipe for disaster. Usually, neither customers nor salesmen end up happy—or rich.

On the other hand, this writer has seen people with few goals in life read success motivation material, begin to apply it positively to a job that was useful and make changes their lives.

The Bible clearly teaches a balance of learning the ways of God, and diligently putting them into practice. May God help all of us to do both.

— NSE

Catholic Believer: "If It's Not in Scripture, I Don't Believe It"

LETTER:

June 27, 2001

I hope there isn't any problems with me being a Roman Catholic [subscriber]. If there is, I would be more than happy to explain the Christian faith with you.

I worship Jesus, honor Mary, I also believe that Jesus instituted seven main outflowings of the spirit, not to mention the other countless ways he pours grace upon us, I call upon Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit, and with his full knowledge, to know that many of the very biased things taught about Catholics are not true. We do not worship statues, we do not worship the Pope, we worship Jesus, its just not in the same form that other Christians do.

If there are any questions about my faith, please ask and I will show you where we believe is in the Bible. Verse for verse literally. If its not in scripture I don't believe it. Thank you for the subscription.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

— Don Marrero Jr, Louisiana.
sunshine70092@webtv.net

RESPONSE: Thank you very much for your kind words. It is my belief that there are spirit-filled believers in many denominations, even though the leaders may teach error or be morally corrupt. A Bible student can find evil and doctrinal error among Catholics, Protestants, Sabbatarians, independents and any other flavor of Christianity. But those things do not stop the existence of believers who are simply blind to the problems. I personally spent over a decade being blind to doctrinal errors of a group that I attended and I have many friends who have done the same thing.

If I want to know what the Catholics teach, I will go to Catholic sources. If I want to know what Catholics do, I will be among them and see—or I will talk to those I trust who do. I realize that Catholics teach that they do not pray to a statue, but that the statue is an aid to worship. I realize that the Catholics teaching is that they do not "pray to Mary", but that they ask Mary to "pray on their behalf".

However, one Catholic article admitted that the words "pray to Mary" (or other saints) are used so much that many of the less-educated Catholics probably think that they are doing exactly that. I do not use statues in my prayers or ask deceased saints to pray for me because neither Christ (Luke 11:1) nor the Apostles (1Tim 2:7) taught these things.

Furthermore, is Mary in Heaven listening to us to pray in our behalf? Look at the following scriptures and what they say about David, a man after God's "own heart", who is dead and not in heaven, but awaiting a resurrection:

"And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all my will'" (Acts 13:22).

"Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day" (Acts 2:29).

"For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"' " (Acts 2:34–35).

"I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15).

What do you believe the Bible says on this issue and why?

I hope that these letters will increase both of our understanding. May God bless your study.

— NSE

[Don Marrero replied to my letter and did not understand how David not being in Heaven had anything to do with Mary not being in Heaven. He quoted other scriptures that clearly showed to him why she was (though it was not clear to me). I could say that because I have the Spirit of God, I understand the Scriptures, but he doesn't understand them because he doesn't have the Spirit. But he could say the same thing about me. And how could we learn anything from each other if we declared the other incapable of understanding? We both

want to understand the Bible. The only way to arrive at the truth is to patiently study the scriptures together, and figure out what is our bias from past teaching and what does the Bible really say. I realized that I just do not have the time to do this now.

—NSE]

Sabbath: An Ox in the Ditch?

LETTER:

July 22, 2001

Hi Norm,

Recently I had to change jobs within my company and now I'm in a situation in which there is overtime, especially for unforeseen problems that are the result of program failures that would result in me being available.

Do you have anything written that explains our view on the Sabbath? My boss wants to know what I can do if a problem would need my immediate attention. Is there cases where it maybe considered an ox in the ditch? If you have anything I would appreciate it.

— Will Blair, Ohio
will_blair@excite.com

RESPONSE: I am sorry to take so long to respond to this. I wrote about it in the December 1997 *Servants' News* issue. There are a couple of paragraphs about it on the second page or so.

In summary, I believe that:

1. Any worker ought to be able to help his boss in a genuine emergency—an unforeseen circumstance, **not** the scheduled handling of problems that routinely occur on the Sabbath.

2. People ought to be able to do a certain amount of scheduled work in emergency-handling jobs where believers would expect service on the Sabbath: utility emergencies, police, fire, hospitals, etc. The temple guards had shifts on the Sabbath. Places like Ambassador College had security, emergency facilities maintenance, and their dining hall crew rotating Sabbath Work. We should be willing to do our part for essential services in the world that we live in. I would work in a hospital emergency room, I would help patients who require help every day, but I would not keep a job where I would be doing Sabbath work that could easily be done on another day.

Also, I think brethren should avoid jobs where they must work an 8-hour shift every Sabbath no matter how

important the job is. The Sabbath is then not any different than any other day. Emergency Sabbath Work should be spread out among as many people as possible. Being "on call" or working a whole day every few weeks is the most that I would do.

I think most jobs that people do on the Sabbath are not necessary, and Sabbatharians should not make use of them, nor should they work in them. These include things like restaurants, airlines, entertainment places, stores, manufacturing, attended gas stations, etc.

I realize that many Sabbatharians would say that nobody should ever work at any job on the Sabbath. However, is it then not **very hypocritical** to call 911 on the Sabbath if someone is sick or dying? Or to call the utility companies if our house loses power? Or to call a tow truck if we run off the road? Does God miraculously deliver all Sabbath-keepers from such problems on the Sabbath? And if it is right to go for help, is it only the non-Sabbatharians who can serve their brethren by being available to help? What would happen if a whole city or whole country were Sabbath Keepers?

Christ's lesson about pulling an ox out of a pit on the Sabbath (Luke 14:5) is a matter of doing emergency work to save money. One could easily let the ox die and buy another if the Sabbath was more important than anything. May God grant us wisdom to know what to do.

— NSE

Hierarchical Groups Probably Won't End Soon

LETTER:
Norm,

June 1, 2001

Thanks for the Feast info and for your continued hard work in publishing the *Servants' News*. We will publish your Feast notice in the next two issues of our newsletter before the Feast arrives.

Concerning your statement on page 1 in the Jan/Feb 2001 *SN*: "Is the Eternal helping His people today by taking them out of hierarchical church groups before He puts an end to these groups?" Would you mind commenting on that statement or are you planning to write about it at some time in the future? Personally I have been thinking the same thing for the past 2-3 years. Just one reason that the corporate groups have had

no growth. They only recycle members.

Hoping you and your family are happy and doing well. Have a great Sabbath.

In Christian Love,

— Rick Beltz, rbeltz@mindspring.com

RESPONSE: Thank you for your continued publishing of *The Churches of God News*. For the last 4 or 5 years I have thought that the hierarchical groups might largely come to an end—their members would realize that they are not doing the big WCG-style work and then they would look for something else. I suppose that there is a human tendency for me to want to believe that my work will be justified by the fact that thousands of people will eventually "see it my way" and leave corporate churches.

Upon thinking about this in greater detail, especially in the light of history, I cannot be at all sure that God will end them any time soon. Nor is it beneficial for me to try to "scare people out of the corporate groups" so that they will all join the independent groups. Paul said, "For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you" (1 Cor 11:19). If God's primary goal is to have His believers follow perfect doctrine, He would have made sure that each one had a perfectly copied, perfectly translated Bible with no uncertainty—and watched to see who obeyed. But search diligently to find truth, and we can never find it all in our lifetime. It seems that God put us in a complex world to see what decisions we will make to follow Him.

A lot of good things are done by the corporate groups. A lot of truth is taught and a lot of people are encouraged to continue following God by their writings and services. Some people repent and are baptised by those groups. I feel that there is error taught there, and that many of their current practices will make them far less effective than they could be. I will not re-iterate those points here as *Servants' News* has had dozens of articles on the subject over the years. Some of the people in corporate groups are highly dependent on their minister and would either "sink or swim" if they went to an independent group. Yes, it would be good for those who could leave and "learn to swim", but maybe God does not now want to "sink" a bunch of the others who are not

yet ready.

The reason one leaves a corporate group should not be only to avoid oppressive government, tithing, false teaching, etc. It should be to use one's spiritual gifts, and to serve in a greater way. I know many non-aligned brethren who are doing that; I know many who are doing very little.

I believe the independent groups have a chance to teach many. But that dedication has to come from Christ in each one. There is nobody standing over them making them do it.

— NSE

Does God Laugh?

LETTER:

Sept 11, 2001

I have been studying the Psalms and in studying Psalm 2, a good number of the translations say that God laughed. Now I was predisposed to take this as God has a sense of humor. But some feel that this does not at all demonstrate God's humor. I know that humor is a type of healing. I would appreciate your input on this subject because it is important to me.

— Ken & Arlette Omick, Wisconsin

RESPONSE: The same Hebrew words used for God "laughing" are used for people who "laugh". Sometimes the context indicates sarcasm, other times it is funny.

We are indeed made in the image of God, the main difference being that we are divided into males and females (Gen 1:27). It is only fitting that the emotions we have are a pattern of what God has. There are other scriptures which show that God is sometimes happy, sorrowful, angry or even "distant". God is continually portrayed in the Bible with attributes of people, though He is perfect and infinitely powerful. It speaks of His arms, fingers, eyes, etc.

One last thought: when we are resurrected, if someone says something funny, will we find ourselves unable to laugh? Or will we be able to, but God will not?

The only way I could see that this is important is if someone decides that people should not laugh because God does not. I think there are enough clear commands in the Bible for us to follow that we do not need to invent some more.

— NSE 

"Truckers Study" from page 2

September 23, 2001

At the truck stop today I picked up a free religious publication for truck drivers and was surprised to open it and see a picture of a driver I met some time ago. He is a retired airline pilot who took to driving for something to do. He was in a terrible wreck with another rig. While he escaped with just bruises, it took heroic and dangerous measures on his part to save the life of the driver of the other rig, whose truck was completely engulfed in flames. It reminded me once again about how much protection these men and women need.

We had four drivers today, including a young woman whose brother is in the Marines and is being transferred to the Persian Gulf area. There was obvious distress in her face.

We talked about justice and mercy, and reviewed many scriptures in the Old Testament about God's mercy on people who turn to Him. God's prophecies are meant as a warning. Punishment on a nation is conditional, for "it may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I propose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin" (Jer 36:3).

One driver told me that the **Promise Keeper's** daily scripture reading on September 11 was Zephaniah 1:14-18:

The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, **a day of devastation and desolation**, a day of darkness and gloominess, **a day of clouds and thick darkness**, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and **against the high towers**.

"I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, **because they have sinned against the LORD**; their blood shall be **poured out like dust**, and their flesh like refuse."

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will **make speedy riddance** of all those who dwell in the land.

Read it and think, but his point was this: God knows what is going on.

My purpose today was to give people hope, that God is merciful, and also to pray for the nation, that it will turn to God. There is a palpable humility in the nation today. The things in which we have our trust have proved to be no gods at all, and there is a reaching for the divine. Most do not know how to come before God, even as the people of Nineveh did not know their right hand from their left. We must learn to show the way, for the nation's heart is open.

[While not every detail of the prophecy fits the WTC disaster, a lot of them are surprisingly close. Only a very few other scriptures would fit this event so closely. Does that mean that God inspired the leaders of the Promise Keepers? Is that proof that

He is working through them? To a member of the Promise Keepers, the answer is probably a clear, "Yes". To others, who believe theirs is the "right group", the answer is a clear, "No—the similarity was just a coincidence".

To me, the answer is that God works with people who have only some truth. Notice the concluding words of the book of Jonah: "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?" The Ninevites did not understand much about God, but God still sent them a prophet and told them to repent.

A Promise Keeper is committed to: 1) honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit; 2) pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises; 3) practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity; 4) building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and Biblical values; 5) supporting the mission of his church by honoring and praying for his pastor, and by actively giving of his time and resources; 6) reaching beyond any racial or denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of Biblical unity; and 7) influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20).

Church of God brethren ought to recognize that an organization can teach a lot of Bible truth, but still have some errors. Items 1, 3, 5 and 7 are very good and have certainly helped many men. They echo God's commands to achieve righteous results—an improvement upon groups that only emphasize "knowing Jesus". While men certainly do need help from other men (point 2), the Bible never mentions creating men-only organizations. Finally, items 5 and 6 can get one into trouble, supporting one's local church, which may belong to a denomination, yet also claiming to reach beyond one's denomination. In some ways, Promise Keepers has become a denomination—switching the loyalty of many Christians from their denomination to the Promise Keepers and their ecumenical agenda.

I believe that God blessed many people through the Promise Keepers' teaching of basic Christian principles. He probably inspired them to write Zephaniah 1:14-18 for their September 11 reading because He cares for the many men who would be reading that scripture that day. However, their leaders are seriously wrong when they encourage people to look to their group in areas where they should not. They also err in discouraging their members from studying and teaching doctrines that typically divide Christian groups. All believers need to study and live "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God", even though we do not come to understand it all at the same time. — NSE]



October 14, 2001

It was good to get back to work after the Feast of Tabernacles, and we were joined today by a regular (my friend Matt who drops by whenever he is in town) and three truck drivers. Matt is a big help in instances where a

driver is struggling with substance abuse, having been there himself, and today he was able to contribute profitably to helping a struggling young man who knows better, but just can't seem to shake the obsession.

The driver pointed out that he has an obsession with drugs rather than a craving. He only starts craving it once he gets near it and samples it. He compared it to a craving for sweets. You're okay until you take the first bite, but at that point you just can't help yourself. The refreshing thing about the conversation was his willingness to accept responsibility for his actions. While he could have blamed many things for his problem, he refused to do so and admitted that such things were no excuse.

The conversation would lead me to believe that September 11 combined with perhaps a leading of the Holy Spirit that began last summer (and a church-going background) have motivated him to look for God. He was very glad to accept a Bible and several tapes. Indeed, he took several Bibles with him because he wants to share them with others.

In a case like this, a person needs a support group, which is often hard for a truck driver to fund. They lead lonely lives. A church can be a wonderful way to have someone hold you accountable and to provide support, and I told him that if he is passing through the area on a Saturday afternoon, he is more than welcome to come to our congregation. We can keep him busy and out of trouble for about four hours.

In addition to helping out this one driver, we discussed whether the nation will turn from its wicked ways. In any case, concern about end time things is certainly on people's minds.

There is so much work to do these days, so many who need the good news of the kingdom. And the laborers are few.

— Lenny Cacchio
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MO 64086

**"Letters About the UCG-IA Audit Analysis"
from page 17**

better off to explain to their members exactly what they are doing. There is a tendency for them not to explain things so that they do not have to answer difficult questions.

But when one is in the business of teaching truth, one should be able to explain those difficult questions. And if there is no good answer for a certain difficult question, then it probably represents a change that the leaders need to make.

Thank you for your letter. It helps all of us see that many are struggling to serve God, even if we do not agree on exactly how to do it.

— NSE

**"Letters in Answer to 'Hierarchical Leader' Letter"
from page 15**

they learn that God did not create church organizations, and that they can meet and study together with whomever is willing to meet with them on the Sabbath? Both you and I have children who are already facing these decisions.

I realize that I cannot decide for anybody, and that the answers to these questions are not fun. But I believe that God wants me to write this message to those who will listen—and quite a few people are still listening.

— Norman Edwards

The Post Office has asked me to print this statement:

**United States Postal Service Statement of
Ownership, Management and Circulation**

Data from PS Form 3526, October 1999

1. Publication Title: Servants' News
2. Publication Number: 016-995
3. Filing Date: 10/1/01
4. Issue Frequency: Bimonthly
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 6
6. Annual Subscription Price: Free requester publication
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107; Contact Person: Norm Edwards; Telephone: 517-625-7480
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: (same as 7)
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: Norman Edwards, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 40072-0107; Editor: (same); Managing Editor: (same)
10. Owner: Norman Edwards, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107.
11. Known Boxholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: (none)
12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates): Not applicable
13. Publication Title: Servants' News
14. Date for Circulation Data Below: July/Aug 2001

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average no. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	2167.00	2000
(1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions stated on form 3541	1449.50	1443
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation	(2) Paid In-Country Subscriptions (3) Sales Through dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution (4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	2.00
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation [Sum of 15b. (1), (2), (3), and (4)]	1451.50	1445
d. Free Distribution	(1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541 (2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541 by Mail (3) Other Classes mailed Through the USPS	354.83
e. Free Distribution Outside the Mail (carriers or other means) [estimate]	50	50
f. Total Free distribution (Sum of 15d. and 15e.)	409.17	335
g. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c. and 15f.)	1860.67	1780
h. Copies not Distributed [saved for back-issue requests]	306.33	220
i. Total (Sum of 15g. and h.)	2167.00	2000
j. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c. divided by 15g. times 100)	78.01%	81.18%

16. Publication of Statement of Ownership: Publication required. Will be printed in the Sept/Oct 2000 issue of this publication.
17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, business manager, or Owner:

Norman A. Edwards Editor, Publisher, Date: 01/1/01

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

Partial Literature List

All items are free upon request. All back issues of *Servants' News* are available as well as a complete **Literature List** and a **Literature Subject Index**.

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

New Item This Issue:

Mature Literature:

Christian Action League Literature List by Al Van Dyk, 4 pages. Nearly 200 Sabbatarian literature items from small

tracts to large booklets. Small fee charged, but permission granted to copy. See news item on page 3 for more information.

Items Featured This Issue:

Mature Literature:

200 Years of Sabbath Keeping In Australia by Bruce Dean, 8 pages. Shows many Sabbatarian Groups in Australia

Ambassador Report Index, 10 pages. A brief description of each of the 71 Ambassador Report issues about the WCG.

Ambassador Report: Should Church of God Brethren Read It? by Eric Snow & Norm Edwards. Two views.

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

Church Government? 32 page booklet. Former WCG/GCG minister (W. Webster), a long-time member (H. Curley) and the late (J. H. Allen) show danger of religious hierarchy.

Eight Studies: Ordination, Laying on of Hands, Tithing, Nicolaitans, Cain, Balaam, Korah, Teachers by an anonymous author, 60 pages. Bible studies shows the problems with religious organizations that are often more like businesses.

Freedom and Christian Responsibility by Dale Stogner, 14 pages. Freedom, morality, love and liberty cause peace and prosperity. We are responsible for our actions and our inactions. We need to use the literature available from a variety of ministries to help ourselves and others grow.

God vs. Evolution Y2K by Rabon Vincent, 214 pages. Book on widely varying topics including evolution, Bible chronology, the calendar and British Israelism.

Is Christianity a Fraud? A Preliminary Assessment of the Conder Thesis, by Eric V. Snow, 136 pages. Now includes

effective rebuttal to Conder's *By Gosh Josh*.

Is Disfellowshipping a Christian Practice?, 12 pages by Arlan Weight. A gentle summary of Church of God disfellowshipping practices covering many related scriptures.

King James Version Translation Errors by Richard Nickels, 12 pages. Translation mistakes in the King James Bible. A few may not be accurate—but a good source to study.

Lessons from Gideon by Kathy Puliafico, 10 pages. Historical background of Gideon with lessons derived for our time.

The Passover Controversy by Sanford Beattie, 40 pages. An explanation of the Old Testament Passover and difficulties with Fred Coulter's first book, *The Christian Passover*.

Pastoral Guide on True Shepherding and Caring for the Flock of God with Servant Leadership and "Being Helpers of Their Joy!" by Bill Swanson, 16 pages. Bible verses and practical points for anyone who ministers or desires to minister to others. This book would radically change the image of corporate churches if it were followed.

Satan's Fate—Life or Death? by Melvin Hershberger, 8 pages. An interesting look at a question that many have not studied (definitely *not* a "salvation" issue).

The Theological Marketplace of Ideas or, the Three "C's" of Ministry by F. Paul Haney, 11 pages. What is necessary for former WCG members to reach the world with the Gospel?

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

Highly Recommended Items Listed Every Issue:

Mature Literature

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

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

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

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman S. Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered

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

What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment? by Norman Edwards, 83 pages. What happens to people after they die? What about "bad" people? "Good" people? Unbelievers? Diligent believers? Lax believers? Read the many scriptures that answer these questions.

Study Resources and Information Freedom Biblical Information Center Catalog by Wayne Schatzle, 12 pages.

Free sources of literature and tapes.

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

The Journal: News of the Churches of God edited by Dixon Cartwright. One free sample issue. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups. 24 pages.

Servants' News Statement of Receipts and Expenses, 2 pages.

Servants' News Literature List, 24 pages.

Servants' News Literature Subject Index, 51 pages. All articles & literature by subject.

Servants' News, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107, USA

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International brethren will receive literature more quickly by writing or e-mailing the nearest address on page 2.