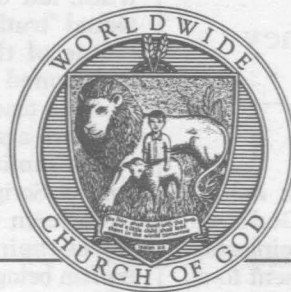


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# The Worldwide News



VOL. XXIII, NO. 21  
DECEMBER 5, 1995

## Church to offer Christian video by Pat Boone

By Thomas C. Hanson

Christian entertainer Pat Boone had a luncheon meeting with Pastor General Joseph Tkach and other church officials Nov. 27 to discuss an agreement for the church to offer Boone's video *Israel, O Blessed Israel*, a gospel music journey in the Holy Land.

The 76-minute video, "an inspirational journey through the cradle of Christianity," will be offered for a donation of \$25 in a letter to *Plain Truth* readers as well as an advertisement on the back cover of the March-April *Plain Truth*, according to editor Greg R. Albrecht.

In the video Boone sings many of his favorite hymns, along with the classic "Exodus," at sites in Israel including the Garden of Gethsemane, Calvary, Bethlehem, Masada, the Sea of Galilee and Jerusalem.

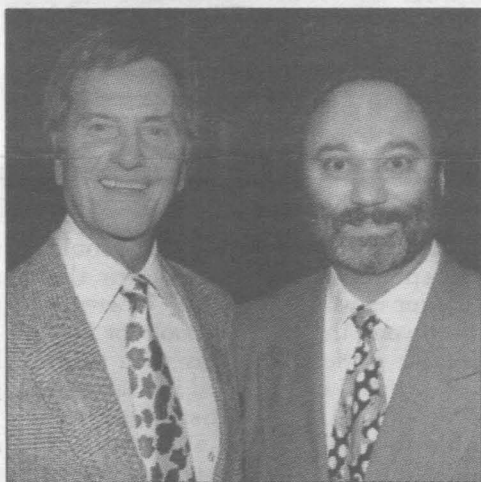
Boone referred to the video as "the most important musical statement of faith" he has ever been a part of.

During the luncheon meeting Boone talked about the video and the doctrinal changes in the Worldwide Church of God, according to Mr. Albrecht. Boone recounted his

own battles with legalism and recognized the pain and anguish such change brings, but he said he knows from personal experience that such change is of God.

Business associates of Boone who also attended the luncheon were Joe Seideman, Mara Seideman, Jon Ross and Carol Ross.

Church officials in attendance were J. Michael Feazell, director of Church Administration; treasurer Bernie Schnippert; Tom Lapacka, manager of Church Relations; and Mr. Albrecht.



Pat Boone and Joseph Tkach



## Personal from...

JOSEPH TKACH

### Are Old Testament laws still binding on Christians?

Most of the doctrinal questions revolve around one central question: Are the Old Testament laws still in force?

The New Testament gives two basic answers to this question: Yes, and no. Some verses indicate continuity, and others indicate change. Some verses maintain the validity of the law; others describe it as having been superseded by Christ.

If we look at one group of verses, we might conclude that we have to keep all OT (Old Testament) laws. If we look at another group of verses, we might conclude that they are all done away. Both answers have scriptural support and validity. We need to look at both sides of the question.

Let's start with the emphasis on continuity. A passage like Matthew 5:17-19 can be used to argue that all OT laws are still in force. Jesus didn't do away with any of God's laws. Rather, he emphasized that we ought to obey God not only in our actions, but also in our hearts. We have to keep every OT law in the spirit, in its attitude and purpose.

Hebrews 8:10 supports this—the new covenant means that God's laws are written in our hearts and minds. The laws are internalized, so

See Personal, page 3

### Employee cutbacks necessary to balance budget

By Bernie Schnippert

In spite of a substantial decrease in contributions in 1995, a balanced budget is nearly in place for 1996. This was accomplished through necessary, but emotionally painful terminations and thoughtful restructuring by managers. Please pray that God will generously provide for those who must find employment elsewhere.

#### Preparing to effectively preach the gospel

I would also like to solicit your prayers on another matter. Pastor General Joseph Tkach has asked key managers to participate in a two-day planning session in mid-December. Through prayer and open discussion, managers will emerge with a sharper vision for the future of the church. Please ask God to guide this process as we prepare to preach the gospel in the most effective way possible.

#### Thank you for your faithful support

The outlook for 1996 is cautiously optimistic. We are determined to spend within our means as we efficiently do the work God has placed before us. Thank you for your faithful, consistent support of the gospel.

*Bernie Schnippert is director of Finance and Planning.*

### Telephone Survey of Plain Truth Subscribers

In the next few weeks, the George Barna research group will be conducting a telephone survey of a small percentage of *Plain Truth* subscribers.

The church has engaged Barna to conduct this survey to learn more about who our readers are and how the magazine may better serve their needs. Since some of our subscribers are members, some members will be phoned. The survey is a legitimate one that has been commissioned by the church.

### Joseph W. Tkach: 1927-1995

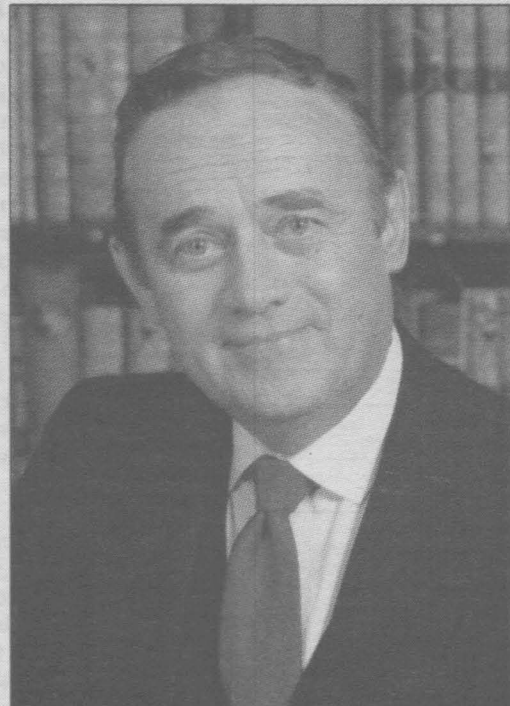
To honor the memory of our late Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach, who died of cancer Sept. 23, we have prepared this tribute issue, beginning on page 5.

His eyes firmly fixed on Jesus Christ as the head of the church, Mr. Tkach with godly love and tireless hands stirred the Worldwide Church of God to reach out to those in need. He urged members, families and supporters to advance and stand strong together.

"The Holy Spirit is clearly at work throughout the church, leading us into greater faith, into greater love for our Lord and Savior and into greater commitment to doing his work in the world," he wrote in August.

Mr. Tkach forged our fellowship into a greater spirit of service as beacons burning brightly in a world in need of Jesus Christ.

We invite you to share the life of Joseph W. Tkach through these pages of historical photographs, milestones and comments from ministers, members and friends of the church.



# The road to orthodoxy

Christianity Today editor writes on the post-Armstrong Worldwide Church of God's commendable journey of faith

By David Neff

Evangelicals know this: A high commitment to following God's will is essential to Christian discipleship; so also is a strong commitment to all the truth we glean from Scripture.

But we also know this: Without an informed theology and experience of grace, these discipleship essentials can lead to legalism, spiritual pride, and isolationism.

That is exactly what happened in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG). Their founder, Herbert W. Armstrong, discerned certain "truths" in Scripture (including the need to keep all of God's law in order to be saved), and he placed a high demand of commitment on his followers (including, for example, a "triple tithe," comparable to what God's Old Covenant people paid). The result was not only a flawed

theology, but, in many cases, legalism, spiritual pride, and isolation.

After Armstrong died, the church's new leadership emulated his commitment—and in their search for truth, left behind many of the individual "truths" he had taught.

One of the first doctrines to be questioned after Armstrong's death was his teaching that believers were not born again until the resurrection.

Re-examining that teaching in the light of Scripture led the WCG leaders (who seem to function as a team) to reject their church's teaching that human beings were themselves destined to become gods, which, in turn, led them to revise their doctrine of the nature of God, which, in turn, led them to teach the biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity. "It was a domino effect," they recently told Christianity Today (CT).

In a recently published doctrinal statement, the WCG teaches in the clearest possible terms not only the Trinity, but also salvation by grace through faith. Most evangelicals should have no quarrel with this new statement, although differences in church practice and eschatology will still distinguish the WCG. Its traditional disciplines of tithing and attendance at festivals, which many believed were essential for salvation, the WCG now considers to be help-

ful, but optional practices.

CT met with a representative leadership group several years ago and was convinced of their commitment, both to Christ and to authentic biblical truth. That commitment, we have learned, has exacted a high price. Many members have felt betrayed by the changes and have left to join splinter groups. The change in teaching about the tithe has resulted in drastically reduced income, necessitating layoffs and downsizing of operations. Just as painful as the layoffs has been the grieving for alienated family members.

WCG leadership believes the departures have now slowed significantly. When WCG members gather this month for their annual Feast of Tabernacles worship service, there will be 30,000 fewer in attendance. (Past events have typically drawn about 85,000.) Of those who will stay away, perhaps a third are not worshipping anywhere.

Despite the losses, WCG leaders remain confident. "We believe the Holy Spirit is leading us to these things," they told CT. "We now know much more of what it means to take up our cross and follow Jesus," they said.

Ironically, the question around which much of the change has revolved is this: Are there Christians in other churches? (Armstrong

taught that Mother Rome and her Protestant daughters together constituted Babylon the Great.)

The WCG had benefited much from the Scripture scholarship of non-WCG scholars, but it had not considered them Christians because they were not sabbatarians. Suddenly, its leaders faced the dilemma squarely: either these scholars are not Christians, or the Sabbath is not the criterion of Christian identity. Armstrong's view was then decisively abandoned.

CT readers will be glad to know that they are no longer considered among the harlot daughters of the Great Whore. But how will we respond? Sadly, Christians outside the WCG have been suspicious and slow to extend the right hand of fellowship. (A few leaders have been helpful, WCG leaders say: Hank Hanegraaff of the Christian Research Institute and Ruth Tucker of Trinity International University, for example; and faculty from Regent College, Fuller Seminary, and Azusa Pacific University have also helped inform the transition. But by and large, Christians have made the WCG journey of faith and doctrine more difficult.)

CT commends the WCG leadership for its courage in pursuit of truth. Can we now welcome their people into this transdenominational fellowship we call evangelicalism?

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## The Worldwide News



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Joseph W. Tkach  
Pastor General (1986-1995)

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## Questions & Answers

FROM THE PASTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

**Proverbs 23:23 tells us, "Buy the truth and do not sell it." Does this mean it is wrong to sell books containing truth?**

No. If that is what the verse meant, then it would mean that only sinners sell the truth, and therefore the only way we could buy the truth is to purchase it from sinners—and by our purchase, we would be involved in their sin! This is not the meaning.

This verse is a proverb, explaining a principle in figurative language. It means, Value truth highly, and never let it go. Today's English Version says, "Truth, wisdom, learning, and good sense—these are worth paying for, but too valuable for you to sell." The Bible in Basic English says, "Get for yourself that which is true, and do not let it go for money."

It is not wrong to charge for books, lectures or classes in which truth is taught.

**Does Matthew 10:8 tell us that it is wrong to use *The Plain Truth* to advertise products for sale?**

No. Moreover, this verse doesn't even say it is wrong to put a subscription price on *The Plain Truth* itself. At present, we plan to continue offering *The Plain Truth* free of charge. However, this is a policy decision and not a doctrinal or biblical necessity. Let's see what the verse says.

In Matthew 10, Jesus sent his disciples out on their first mission. He told them to heal the sick, drive out demons and preach that the kingdom of God was (then as now) near. He also told them that they did not need to take any supplies with them, not even a money bag. And they were not to accept payment for their services: "Freely you have received, freely give" (verses 5-10).

The disciples on those early missions were not to carry money or

accept money. However, they could accept room and board, "for the laborer is worth his keep." Wherever they went, they were to look for hospitable persons and stay with them as long as they preached in that area (verses 10-11). The disciples were able to preach, heal and cast out demons, and the people gave them what they needed.

Shortly before he was killed, Jesus asked his disciples, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" And they answered, "Nothing" (Luke 22:35). The experience had been a practical lesson for the disciples' faith.

However, Jesus then told his disciples, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag" (verse 36). Jesus told them to change the way that they went on missionary journeys. They were to carry a purse. They would need money, presumably because there would be no hospitable persons in some areas. The money would presumably come from those who did accept the message.

Many years later, the apostle Paul wrote that those who preach the gospel have a right to be supported by it (1 Corinthians 9:4-14). Although he did not use that right with the church at Corinth, it was nevertheless a right. Traveling preachers could ask one area to subsidize a missionary journey into another area. Paul commended the church at Philippi for giving him financial support even when he was preaching in another city.

This principle may be applied to ministry today: We may ask believers to pay the expenses of preaching the gospel. This is what we do when we ask members for tithes and offerings. We are asking them to pay the expenses of local churches, *The Plain Truth* and our other literature—all of

which are used to preach the gospel not only within the church but also to many nonmembers.

Our services are open to the public. Those who wish to hear the gospel may do so without charge. The church makes the gospel available for free. In church services, people are sometimes told that Christians have a financial responsibility to support those who preach the word of God to them. They may be asked for money seven times a year, but no one will ask them to leave if they do not give anything. The gospel is being freely given even though requests for money are made and people are exhorted to give.

There is no prohibition on the church charging for anything it produces. Christ did not mean that Bibles, for example, should not be sold. It is scripturally permissible for publishers to sell Bibles (and other books and magazines containing the gospel) to those who can pay the production costs. Of course, Bibles are often available for free, but that doesn't change the fact that they may be sold. Before printing was invented, for example, Bibles were extremely rare and expensive; there was no obligation to give them away. It is not wrong to sell religious books and Bibles or to ask for a donation.

Nor would it be wrong for *The Plain Truth* to include advertisements of Christian books and Bibles for sale. Our subscribers would be under no pressure to purchase any of the products. Moreover, advertisers would be helping us to continue offering *The Plain Truth* free of charge. For that reason, Media Operations is investigating this possible source of income for *The Plain Truth*.

**Does Deuteronomy 12:30-31 mean**  
See Q & A, page 8

# Double your contributions and help support AU

Ambassador is eligible for matching gifts from almost all companies with educational matching gift programs

By Thomas R. Delamater

**BIG SANDY**—At Ambassador University we are excited about the opportunity to provide a quality, Christian education in today's world.

For almost 50 years, thousands of students have benefited from Ambassador's motto to "Recapture True Values." To make an Ambassador education as affordable as possible to the individual student, the university subsidizes a portion of each student's attendance cost from private donations.

*Thomas R. Delamater is director of Institutional Advancement at Ambassador University.*

Many friends of Ambassador have asked: "How can I help? I believe in the mission of the university and would like to provide assistance, but through my current contributions to the church and other charitable causes, I feel I'm already donating as much as I can afford."

## Matching donations

But what if you could increase the effect of your current contributions without giving one dime more? This is possible for many people through the practice of gift matching.

A matching gift program is one in which a company matches its employees' donations to educational and other nonprofit institutions. In effect, this multiplies the contribution of the individual—often to double or triple the original amount.

Ambassador University, as an accredited four-year educational institution, is eligible for matching gifts from almost all companies with educational matching gift programs.

Thanks to current participants, these individual and company dona-

tions have become a much appreciated source of funding for the university. Within the last year, the number of matching gift participants has tripled to almost 400 individual donors from 214 companies.

## Education principal focus

The Worldwide Church of God, through the generous contributions of its members and supporters, is the principal sponsor of Ambassador University.

Although corporations do not as a rule match gifts made to churches, companies will match gifts made directly to a church-affiliated university such as Ambassador, since the principal focus at such an institution is education. Therefore, contributions made directly to Ambassador can be multiplied through corporate gift matching.

Possibly, you know fellow employees, friends or relatives who would be interested in lending support to Ambassador as a Christian university. Let them know about Ambassador and the benefits of multiplying their contributions through gift

matching.

But maybe you don't work for a company that has a gift matching policy. How can you help?

Perhaps you know of a friend or a relative that, if they were aware of the philosophy and merits of an Ambassador education, would consider donating to the university. And if their company offered a gift matching program, those donations could be doubled in value.

## Income tax credit

In addition, donations to Ambassador University can be used for income tax credit in the United States and Canada.

We would be happy to send you more detailed information, including what is required to begin a matching gift program if your company does not currently offer such a plan.

Please write or call Gift Matching, Ambassador University, Big Sandy, Texas, 75755. Phone: 1-903-636-2040; fax: 1-903-636-2365; e-mail address: au\_institutional\_advancement@ambassador.edu

# Personal: Laws still valid but applied in a spiritual way

Continued from page 1

we, by our new nature, want to keep them. Hebrews 8:10 is a quote of Jeremiah 31:31-33, we could argue, and the laws that Jeremiah meant were the laws that were valid in his day: the old covenant laws. They were all given by God and, if we love him, we will want to keep them.

For example, our love for God will motivate us to be circumcised, to keep the Jubilee year and sabbatical years. We will be diligent to avoid all forms of uncleanness, and we will wear phylacteries and only pure fabrics. We will offer sacrifices, not only for sin but also for fellowship offerings and thank offerings. When Jeremiah described the kingdom of God, old covenant customs were included. This is what he meant.

## Spiritual application

These laws are still valid—but, as we know, they are applied in a spiritual way. The application of the law has been transformed by the coming of Jesus Christ. If our hearts are circumcised, it does not matter whether we have been circumcised in the flesh. If we are offering spiritual sacrifices, we do not need to offer animals.

If we are always forgiving debts and liberating people from bondage, we do not have to do anything different on sabbatical years. If we are treating our livestock and farmland properly, we do not have to do anything different on sabbatical years.

If we examine our hearts for corruption and are being cleansed by Jesus Christ, then we do not have to be fanatical about destroying houses that have mildew. If our thoughts are pure, we don't have to worry about our fabrics. If we are always thinking of God and his laws, we don't have to wear phylacteries. The laws are valid, but the way in which we obey them has been transformed by the coming of Jesus Christ.

## Spiritual dimension

The point is that some OT laws are, in Christian application, spiritu-

alized. They are removed from the dimensions of space and time and transferred into the spiritual dimension of attitude and interpersonal relationships.

Some people fight against spiritualizations. I've heard of one former minister who advocates old covenant customs even to the point that he says Christians should offer animal sacrifices if the temple were still standing! And yet, as far as I know, he does not wear phylacteries or blue threads in tassels on his garments, nor does he advocate the destruction of a home when mildew is discovered.

Moreover, I don't know why the mere absence of a temple should stop an obligation (if it really is an obligation) to sacrifice animals. Christian ministers are the New Testament priesthood (or at least we used to argue that when we discussed tithing), and the church can declare where God places his name (as we argued concerning the Feast sites). Sacrifices were part of correct worship long before Moses, so the end of the old covenant simply means that sacrificing is no longer the exclusive duty of Levites. We ought to worship God like Abel, Noah and Abraham did—and that includes animal sacrifices.

So, according to this logic, ministers ought to make animal sacrifices, preaching all the while that these animals remind us of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Also, we ought to kill Passover lambs in addition to partaking of bread and wine, because Jesus only added to the law; he did not take anything away. The sacrifices may be shadows, but even when the reality has come, the shadow still exists! Animal sacrifices are very educational, full of spiritual meaning, and it would be wrong to ignore any of God's commands.

I have been arguing facetiously in the above two paragraphs, of course, but elements of the above argument have been used to promote various old covenant customs. My main point is that some OT laws are spiritualized. Almost everyone can agree on that.

However, there are all sorts of

opinions out there concerning which laws may be spiritualized and which cannot. Some people want physical circumcision. Some want land sabbaths. Some may even want tree-branch booths. Some want first tithe but not second and third. Some want weekly Sabbaths but not annual. Some want new moons. Many different doctrinal packages exist; each person thinks his own is the biblical one and that the others are inconsistent.

Some people are willing to say that the old covenant is obsolete; others are not comfortable with this statement. Some are willing to say that gentiles do not need to keep the law of Moses; some are not. Some are willing to say that the "law" of Galatians 3:19 is the old covenant; some are not.

With so many different opinions floating around, it's difficult to know where to start in a rational discussion. What biblical criteria can we use when discussing which laws are spiritualized and which must be kept in the letter as well as the spirit?

## Critical questions

In discussions, we need to start by defining the issues—can the person agree that the new covenant has been established (Hebrews 8:6)? Can the person agree that Christians should live by the terms of the new covenant? Can the person agree that some OT laws, such as tassels and phylacteries, are obsolete even if the New Testament says nothing about such laws? Can the person give a rational reason why some old laws are valid in the letter and others are not, or is the position irrational?

The OT clearly commanded the Israelites to wear blue threads in tassels on their garments (Numbers 15:38-39). Was this law inspired by God, or not? Answer: It was. Is this law obsolete? Answer: It is. Who has the authority to declare a God-given law obsolete? Answer: Only God.

Does the New Testament specifically rescind this law? Answer: No. It says nothing about this specific law. Then how can we prove, with divine authority, that it is obsolete? Answer:

Because the New Testament declares the entire old covenant obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). As a law code, as a source of laws, it is not valid.

That brings us to our second approach to OT law: None of it is valid. Christians do not have to keep the law of Moses because those laws were a temporary package, designed to be in force only until the Messiah came. Now that he has come and given a better covenant, the first is obsolete.

A covenant is something like a contract. In business, people make contracts. A farmer agrees to deliver tomatoes to the store every Tuesday, and the store agrees to pay a certain price per pound. If he comes on Monday, the store is not necessarily obligated to buy. If he brings broccoli, the store is not obligated to buy. Now, what happens if the farmer is simply unable to bring tomatoes on Tuesday because his entire crop is rotten? Perhaps there will be penalties; it depends on how the contract is written.

Suppose now that the store makes a new contract with the farmer: Bring every vegetable that you have, as often as you pick it. This new contract even specifies that the old contract is null and void. The old restrictions (only tomatoes, only on Tuesday) are irrelevant, because the new contract supersedes the old.

A farmer and a store can have several contracts simultaneously, concerning different vegetables, different prices and terms and expiration dates, but God has only one covenant with his people. We do not simply add the new on top of the old and try to keep both the letter and the spirit of every law. We do not have to wear tassels on the outside and keep the law in our hearts as well. No, the new has replaced the old (Hebrews 10:9), and we focus on the spirit rather than the letter. Of course, it is true that in some cases the proper spirit will cause us to keep the letter, but in other cases it is not true.

Consider the spirit of adultery, for example. If we avoid lust, then we will also (without any need for a

See Personal, page 12

# Paganism and where Christians draw the line

Paul allowed the Corinthian Christians to eat meat without investigating its origin. Similarly, we use many customs today without concern for their possibly pagan origin.

By Michael Morrison

Paganism, as we know, is a highly controversial subject, but it does need to be discussed. Can we use pagan customs in the Church of God?

We need to recognize that we already do. Simply because something has a pagan origin does not mean that it is sinful to use it, even for a religious use.

- Wedding rings were and are a pagan custom, and there is no biblical command for them, but we use them in church-sanctioned ceremonies.

- Wedding ceremonies themselves were also a pagan custom, and are not commanded in Scripture.

- Funerals include pagan customs, too, based on erroneous ideas about the afterlife. Scripture says nothing about embalming, cremating, caskets or putting flowers on graves.

- Pagans created statues of animals and people, both life-size and miniatures. They had statues in their flower gardens and statues in their homes. These things have lost their "pagan" connotations because people do not believe in such gods and goddesses anymore.

- Money has pagan designs on it. Some U.S. coins used to have the goddess "Liberty" on them. Dollar bills have an eye over a pyramid.

- Pagans assigned days of the week to different gods, and we still use these names.

So the question arises, How careful must we be in weeding paganism out of our lives? Where do we draw the line? The answer is, different Christians draw the line in different places.

We need to allow some diversity on these issues, especially when we remember our historical tendency to judge people about paisley neckties, medicine, makeup, birthdays and skirt lengths.

Of course, we are not the only ones who made mistakes like that. The Free Methodist church, for example, used to forbid wedding rings, as did many other groups in that tradition. These kinds of concerns were common among conservative Christians.

We want to be careful to do what God says, and if God tells us to avoid paganism, then we carefully do it. So we, and many others, erred on the side of forbidding too much—but we erred.

We made commands about things that God didn't command, and we had to back off when we learned more.

## Example of the Corinthians

In the first century church, gentile Christians were told to avoid meat that had been sacrificed to pagan idols (Acts 15:29). However, Paul told the Corinthians that they could eat meat sold in the public market even though that meat had probably been sacrificed to an idol (1 Corinthians 10:25).

And he told them not to eat in the

pagan temple. In other words, he told them to avoid blatant paganism, but they did not have to superstitiously avoid everything that paganism might have touched.

In Corinth, some Christians were more careful than others, and some more liberal than others. Paul told them they could eat the meat, but he also told them to be cautious about causing offense. However, love does not mean that we all have to abide by the strictest person's conscience (verses 32-33).

Now let us imagine a first century potluck in the Corinthian church. Everyone has brought food and everyone has eaten a little bit of everything. Suddenly some overly zealous convert, anxious to avoid the paganism he recently came out of, starts asking questions about the meat.

The Smiths, he finds out, bought their beef from John Pagan, and John always has his cows killed at the temple of Zeus. The casserole has been tainted with pagan-tainted meat, and everybody has eaten some of it!

What should the zealous convert do with this information? Should he announce it throughout the congregation, leading to an ever more diligent search for pagan-tainted foods? Of course not. The sensible (and the Christian) thing to do would be to keep quiet—but we know that overly zealous converts sometimes aren't sensible.

Their zeal overcomes good sense, and although they think they are acting in love, they are actually causing an unnecessary and unhelpful disturbance with their "knowledge." That's what happens today when people preach that wedding rings are pagan.

It is possible to be too zealous in avoiding things that have connections with paganism. Yelling about idol-tainted meat doesn't do anything to strengthen anyone's faith in Christ. All it would do is cause doubts and irritations. That is basically what we did in our vociferous condemnations of Christmas.

People today generally learn about Christmas as a Christian custom, not as a pagan custom. It's like they saw the meat in the market and there was a sign saying "OK for Christians." So they bought it, and then we came along and told them it was tainted.

Some people don't think that the example of meat can apply to holidays; some people do. So, they draw their lines in different places.

Each person considers himself or herself as strong and others as weak, but how are the weak and the strong to get along with each other? Not by enforcing conformity, but by allowing some diversity.

## When was Jesus born?

Some people have claimed that Jesus was born near the fall festivals. That is possible, but it is not proven. It is not likely that Augustus would risk a rebellion by requiring each person to go to his own city at the same time as the local religion required everyone to go to Jerusalem.

Many people have objected to the idea that Jesus was born in December, since there were shepherds in their fields (Luke 2:8), and shepherds didn't normally do that in December. But we must remember that this was not a normal year.

Augustus had told everyone to go to his or her own city (verse 3), but the shepherds had not—they were living in the fields! They may have

been tax evaders. They had reason to stay away from town as long as they could. Of course, this doesn't prove that Jesus was born in December, but it does show that the chief objection to a December birth isn't necessarily conclusive.

In the year 221 (long before the time of Constantine), Julius Africanus came up with Dec. 25 as the date of Jesus' birth. He doesn't tell us how he came up with this date, but a later author calculates the date in this way: Zechariah was serving in the temple during the fall festivals when Gabriel told him that his wife would conceive (Luke 1:8, 23). Jesus was conceived six months later (verse 26), near the spring equinox. Jesus would therefore be born in late December.

Of course, this calculation is not proof (the starting assumptions are not proven) but it shows that the date was not necessarily based on paganism. The date could have been calculated without any reference to pagan customs.

Julius' calculation may have been innocent, or it may have been contrived. We do not know what his motive was. Therefore, we cannot dogmatically say that the Dec. 25 date was contrived simply because a pagan festival already existed on that date. We weren't there, so we cannot claim to know that it was a deliberate attempt to get Christians to observe a pagan day.

When the church first began celebrating Christmas, it had nothing to do with trees and holly and reindeer. All those were added centuries later in northern Europe. The fact that non-Christian customs were later associated with the festival does not prove that the date itself originated in paganism.

However, for the moment let us suppose that Christmas originated as a deliberate substitution for Saturnalia. Many of the people who attended church were recently converted pagans. Some were not-yet-converted pagans.

They were attracted to the Saturnalia festivities, and sitting at home alone was not a desirable option when merrymaking could be heard in the streets all around. So, the theory goes, the church provided a

clean alternative: going to church.

Would it be wrong to have a church service in deliberate opposition to Saturnalia?

There is no question of the church trying to worship God by the customs of the heathen—the church is fighting against the customs of the heathen. Only the date is the same, and there is good reason to have church services on that date, on which members can invite their unconverted friends and family into church and away from paganism.

At some point, Christians made the comparison: On this date, pagans celebrate the birth of the sun god, but we are worshiping the sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2). We can celebrate his birth, too.

That may have been the way Christmas started. Apparently in the early centuries it was primarily a church service. And the strategy seems to have been successful: No one celebrates Saturnalia any more. Christians don't observe Christmas in honor of the sun god, just as Christians don't worship the figurines or statues that they have in their homes. Although the day was once used for idol worship, it isn't anymore.

Consider the case of Christians in Korea, for example. Dec. 25 was not a pagan holiday there. And yet Christians there now observe Dec. 25. Why? Because missionaries introduced the holiday.

For them, it has a Christian origin, not a pagan one. Should the scrupulous Christians go in to tell them that Dec. 25 was once sacrificed to an idol and should therefore be avoided? That approach creates doubts, not dedication. It does not edify or encourage. But this was sometimes our approach.

## Scriptures

Two scriptures have often been used to argue against Christmas customs. The most recent edition of our Christmas booklet explains that Jeremiah 10 has nothing to do with Christmas trees.

That custom originated in northern Europe and had nothing to do with Jeremiah centuries earlier. The Nov. 14 *WN* also explains this, and it has a

See Paganism, page 9

## Christmas Revisited

I agree that in the past we have gone overboard concerning things with a pagan past, including Christmas.

I'd like to share with you an experience I had several years ago regarding the church and the story of the birth of our Savior. I was preparing questions for a game of Bible Baseball for our Youth Opportunities United (YOU).

The questions are designated as singles, doubles, triples and home runs depending on their difficulty. I was looking for a question that would make a good single. I decided to ask what gifts the Magi brought to the baby Jesus.

Having grown up observing Christmas I assumed that this would be an easy question. Imagine my surprise when none of our YOU members had any idea what the answer was.

In thinking about it later I realized the reason was that the church and many parents never read to their children the scriptures dealing with Jesus' birth.

Why? Because of the strong association between those scriptures and Christmas. I thought at the time, and more so now, that it's sad that parents should feel guilty about reading the story of our Savior's birth in the Bible to their children.

To feel we are somehow sinning by reading a portion of the Bible is tragic indeed. If anyone has not read Ralph Woodrow's booklet *Christmas Reconsidered*, I would highly recommend it.

[Copies are \$4 each, postage paid, or \$2.50 each for five or more copies. Send orders to Ralph Woodrow, Box 124, Riverside, California, 92502-0124.]

After reading his booklet I realize that there is another valid point of view concerning the observance of Christmas as a celebration of the birth of our Savior. And that above all we shouldn't judge others as sinners who choose to use Christmas for that purpose.

Warren D. Wilson  
Pastor

Clarksburg & Parkersburg, West Virginia

# Milestones in the life of Joseph W. Tkach

By Jeff Zhorne

**March 16, 1927**—Joseph William Tkach is born in Chicago, Illinois, the only son of Vasil and Mary Tkach.

**Jan. 17, 1945 to July 22, 1946**—Mr. Tkach serves in the U.S. Navy during World War II, seeing action on a destroyer in the South Pacific. He earns certificate in basic engineering.



Mr. Tkach and a World War II buddy.

**1950**—Mr. Tkach completes Hupp Aviation apprenticeship program and is credentialed as a journeyman.

**1950 to 1963**—Mr. Tkach works at Hupp Aviation, working his way to supervisor and union steward.

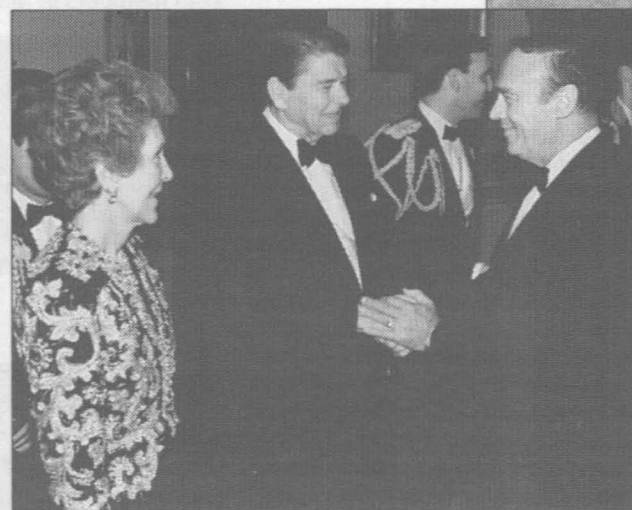
**March 31, 1951**—Mr. Tkach and Elaine Alice Apostolou are married in Chicago.

**Dec. 23, 1951**—Joseph Tkach Jr. is born.

**Dec. 23, 1953**—Tanya Tkach is born.

**Nov. 6, 1956**—Jennifer Tkach is born.

**March 1, 1957**—Dean Blackwell



President and Mrs. Reagan at the White House.

baptizes Mr. and Mrs. Tkach, and Mr. Tkach's parents, Vasil and Mary.

**Jan. 7, 1961**—Mr. Tkach ordained a deacon.

**Dec. 15, 1962**—Mrs. Tkach ordained a deaconess.

**June 3, 1963**—Mr. Tkach ordained a local church elder.

**1957 to 1966**—Mr. Tkach assisted Mr. Blackwell in Chicago-area churches and helped establish churches in South Bend, Fort Wayne and Indianapolis, Indiana; Rockford



Elaine and Joseph W. Tkach with their son, Joseph Jr.

and Peoria, Illinois; Davenport, Iowa; Grand Rapids, Michigan; St. Louis, Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Cincinnati, Ohio.

**July 17, 1966**—Tkach family leaves Chicago for Pasadena, where Mr. Tkach will attend Ambassador College.

**1969 to 1971**—Mr. Tkach serves in the Los Angeles congregation.

**1971**—First Feast of Tabernacles in Pasadena coordinated by Mr. Tkach with 312 attending.

**1971 to 1974**—Mr. Tkach serves in the San Marino, California, A.M. and P.M. congregations.

**Feb. 19, 1974**—Mr. Tkach ordained a preaching elder.

**1974 to 1979**—Mr. Tkach serves in



With British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

the San Gabriel Valley A.M. and Pasadena A.M. congregations.

**1979 to 1986**—Mr. Tkach directs Ministerial Services.

**Sept. 27, 1979**—Mr. Tkach ordained an evangelist.

**Jan. 16, 1986**—Mr. Tkach becomes pastor general after Herbert Armstrong's death.

**Feb. 3, 1986**—Mr. Tkach meets with Warren Burger, chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, and John Van de Kamp, California attorney general, at the dedication of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in Pasadena.

**March 1, 1986**—In his first church visit as pastor general, Mr. Tkach speaks to brethren in Phoenix, Arizona.

**March 15, 1986**—4,600 brethren from three states gather to hear Mr. Tkach on his first visit to Amba-

sador College as pastor general. Mr. Tkach shook 3,000 hands.

**April 4, 1986**—After initiating a program to recognize employee service, Mr. Tkach awards plaques and

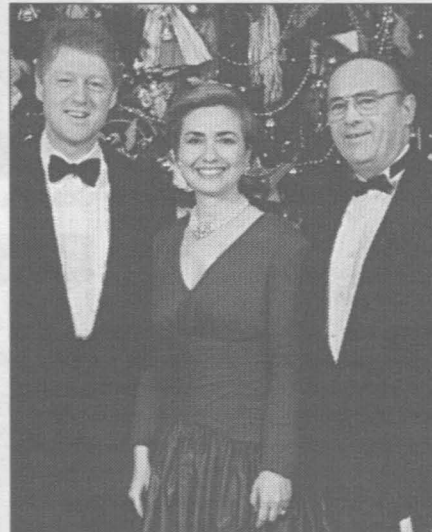


Jennifer, Tanya and Joseph Jr. in the early 1960s

watches to 18 employees who had worked for the church or college for 25 years or more.

**Dec. 7, 1986**—Mr. Tkach attends the Ninth Annual Kennedy Center Honors in Washington, D.C., and meets President Ronald Reagan.

**Feb. 3, 1987**—On his first trip to the Middle East, Mr. Tkach meets King Hussein of Jordan Feb. 7 and



With President and Mrs. Clinton

visits the Ambassador Foundation projects.

**January 1988**—After two years of traveling, the pastor general logged 256,400 miles and spoke to more than 75,000 brethren at 56 church locations in 24 countries.

**May 22, 1988**—Pasadena ministers honor Mr. Tkach on his 25th anniversary as an ordained minister by presenting him with a watch and plaque.

**September 1988**—Mr. Tkach approves Ambassador College in Big Sandy to offer a four-year program and to pursue accreditation.

**May 20, 1989**—At a Pasadena banquet commemorating the 20th anniversary of Apollo 11, Mr. Tkach

meets Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon.

**July 27, 1989**—Mr. Tkach signs check for the final payment on the Ambassador Auditorium, completing a 15-year mortgage.

**Dec. 14, 1989**—Chancellor Tkach announces the consolidation of Ambassador College from Pasadena to Big Sandy.

**July 17, 1991**—The Pasadena Rotary Club names Mr. Tkach an honorary Rotarian for the fifth year in a row.

**May 15, 1992**—Mr. Tkach breaks ground for Harold Jackson hall, the first building in a new master plan to accommodate growth and expansion at Ambassador College.

**Summer 1993**—To broaden the scope of church services, Mr. Tkach directs an open-house pilot program in the Washington, D.C., area.

**April 7, 1994**—Marking the 20th anniversary of the Ambassador Auditorium, Mr. Tkach presents soprano Leontyne Price with the Ambassador Award for Excellence.

lence.

**June 25, 1994**—Accreditation of Ambassador College finally reached.

**May 12, 1995**—Mr. Tkach undergoes gall bladder surgery.

**May 28, 1995**—Mr. Tkach undergoes second surgery, during which a cancerous, grapefruit-size mass is removed.

**July 1995**—Mr. Tkach begins chemotherapy treatments for cancer.

**Aug. 18, 1995**—Greeted by a standing ovation, Mr. Tkach welcomes students to Ambassador University.

**Sept. 5, 1995**—Mr. Tkach names his son, Joseph Tkach Jr., deputy pastor general, after doctors discover bone cancer in Mr. Tkach's body.

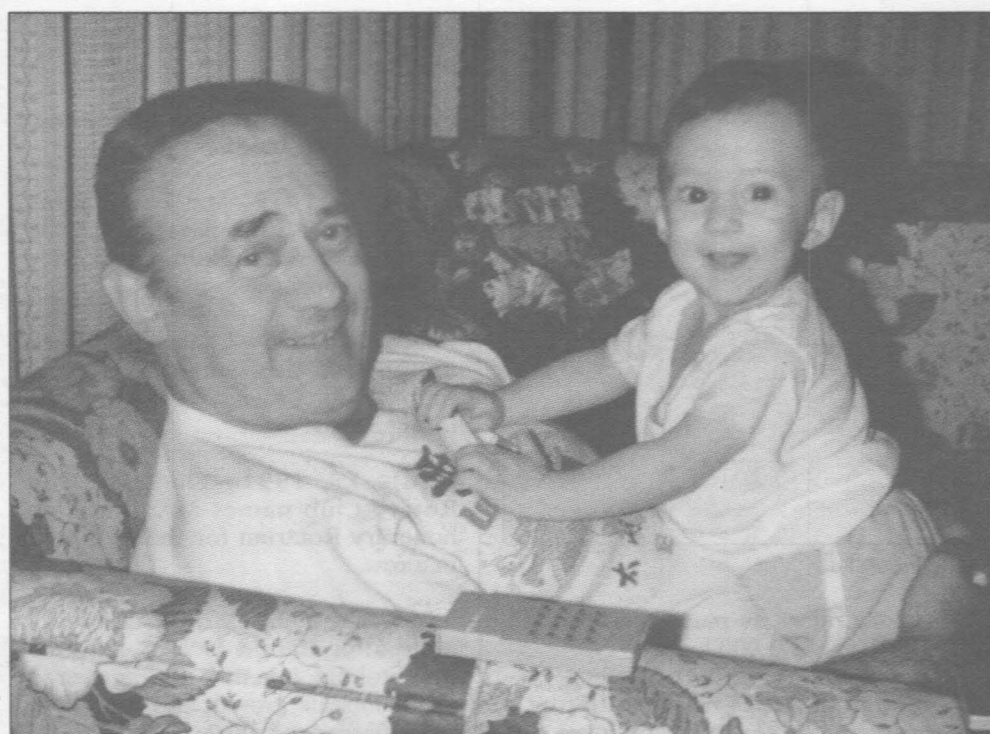
**Sept. 9, 1995**—In what would prove to be his final messages, Mr. Tkach speaks to the Pasadena A.M. and P.M.



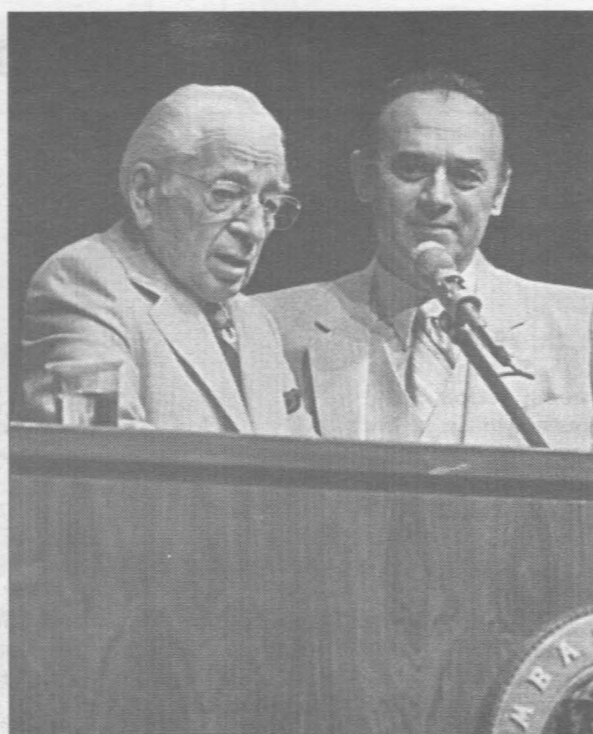
Meeting President Bush and his wife, Barbara, at the White House.

congregations, thanks members for their prayers and love, and asks that they keep the faith and spread it.

**Sept. 23, 1995**—Mr. Tkach, 68, dies of complications from cancer at Huntington Memorial Hospital in Pasadena.



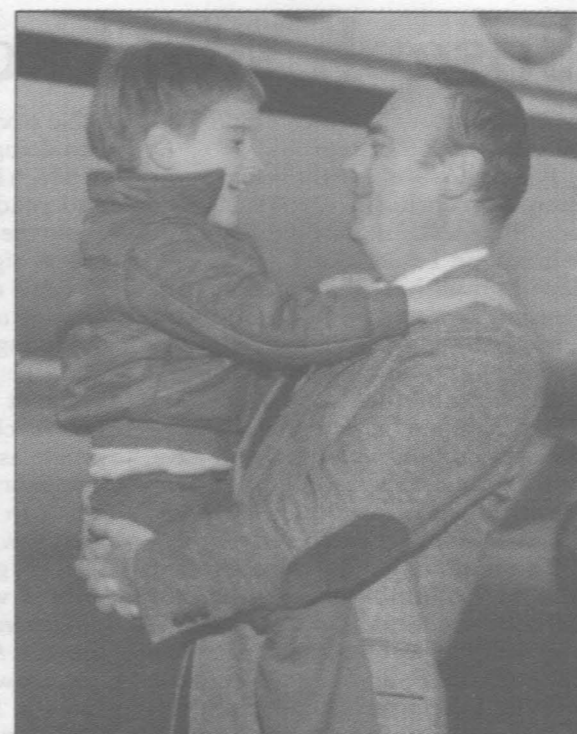
With grandchild Joey, son of Joseph Jr. and Tammy Tkach



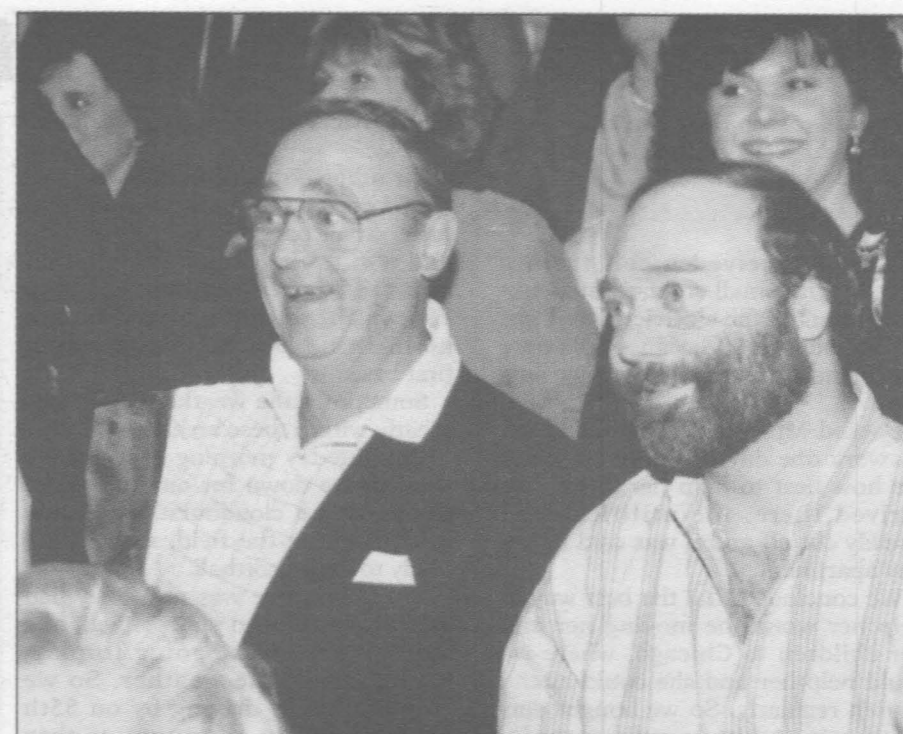
50th anniversary of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, 1981



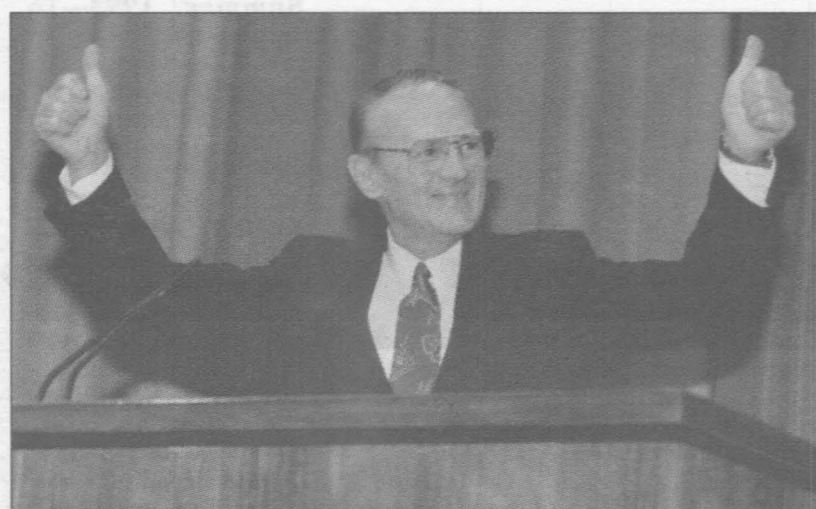
Trinidad greeting Jan. 4, 1987 with Clifton Charles and Stan Bass



Holding grandson Gregory Horchak March 1986



Gleeful at an Ambassador Royals basketball game in Big Sandy



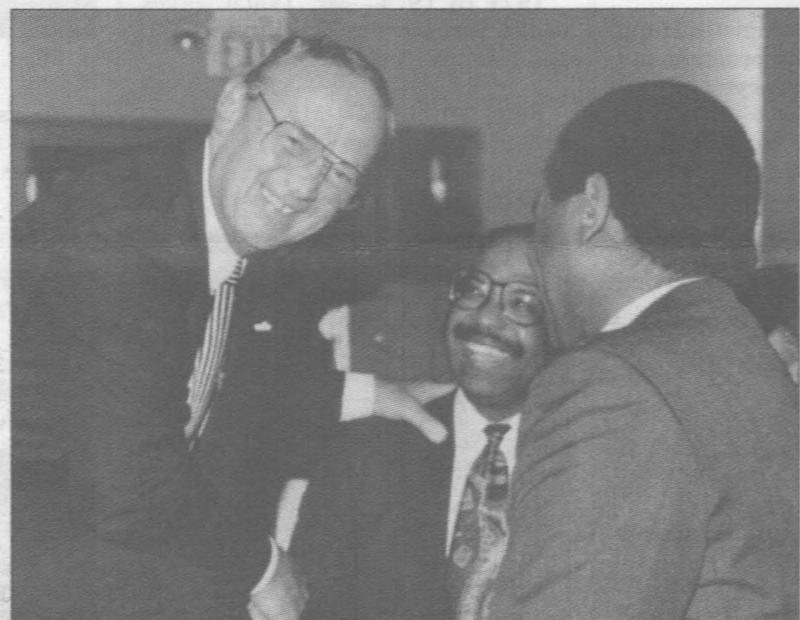
Mr. Tkach's last message, Sept. 9, 1995



Kibirichia, Kenya, August 1986



Regional directors conference, Nov. 18, 1985



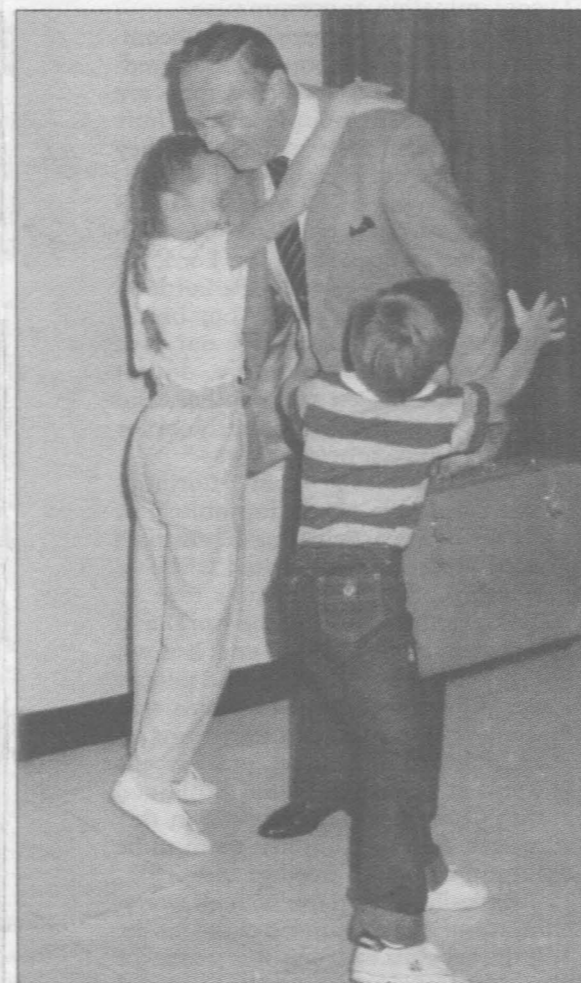
Columbus, Ohio, church visit June 12, 1993



With members in Martinique January 1987



Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana members April 22, 1987



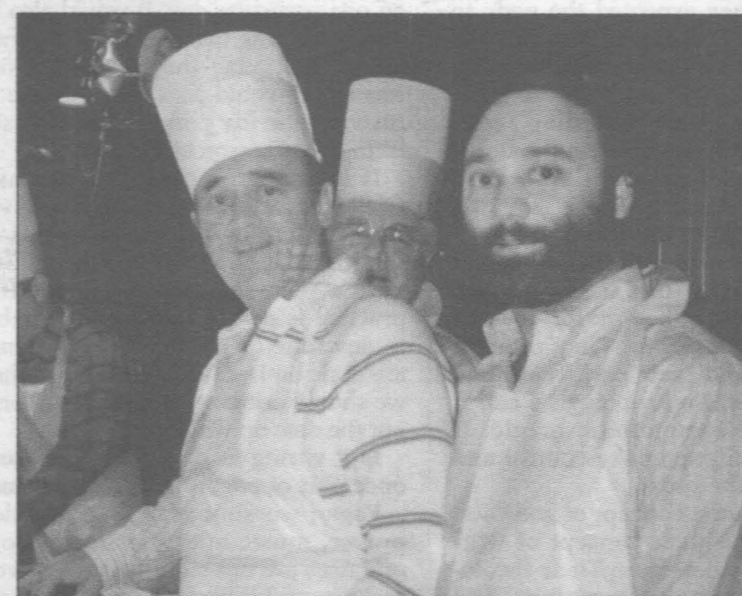
Grandchildren in Melbourne, Australia, December 1987



Smiles in Melbourne, Australia, December 1987



Kibirichia, Kenya, August 1986



Serving brethren at a pancake breakfast in Pasadena



With Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kolek, February 1987



Brethren in Rome, Italy, July 20, 1987

# A rich and exciting life in Christ's service

# Biographical sketches of Joseph W. Tkach

*These biographical sketches were compiled by evangelist Dean Blackwell.*

## White overalls

Once I received a call from a woman with small children in southern Indiana. Her electricity and gas were to be shut off because bills were left delinquent by her deserting husband.

I asked Mr. Tkach if he could get off work one day and go with me to see how best to help her. When we arrived there, the utilities were already cut off and it was cold in her tiny apartment.

We concluded that the best way to help her would be moving her and her children to Chicago, where we could help her and she could attend church regularly. So we bought ourselves some white overalls, rented a trailer, loaded the family and moved them temporarily into the Tkaches' home in Chicago.

Joseph Tkach Jr. said he never knew who he would find occupying his room when he came home from school! But, as Mr. Tkach practiced, the church is a spiritual hospital, which aids people in their spiritual

and physical trouble and problems.

## Milwaukee comes for softball

Our regular Sunday hangout was the softball park on 55th Street. We had a church softball league that included northern Indiana, southern Wisconsin, southern Michigan and northern Illinois. Mr. Tkach played first base.

Sometimes the weather could vary greatly within these areas.

One Sunday morning Milwaukee's team drove down for our scheduled game. After a cloudburst, water was ankle-deep on the field, so we were ready to forget softball.

But Milwaukee was not! They had driven 110 miles to play softball, and softball they were going to play, regardless of the weather. So we played. People driving by on 55th couldn't believe their eyes as they saw full-grown men in ankle-deep water laughing and running and having a great time.

## Whitewash brushes

In Spokesman Club, whenever an evaluator did not give a speaker any constructive criticism or any helpful suggestions, he was given a

whitewash brush, which could also be given for other reasons.

For example, one night before vocal exercises concluded, Mr. Tkach ventured to tell an anti-Texas joke. Whereupon I summoned him to present him with a whitewash brush. Brushes were mounted on a base with a small string, chain or cord attached and were worn around the neck.

In the tabletopics portion, Mr. Tkach told another anti-Texas joke. I recalled him to the lectern and gave him a second whitewash brush. Showing stick-to-it-iveness, Mr. Tkach persisted in telling yet another such joke.

To maintain consistency, I called him to the front and awarded him with a third whitewash gift. Would you believe, before the night was through he had seven whitewash brushes hanging around his neck!

Jokingly, I have said that is what kept the men so humble in those days with their heads quite bowed. But how much fun men had learning to become better speakers and leaders, and drawing so close to each other like living brothers and family.

## A long Bible study

We conducted Wednesday night

Bible studies in the Chicago church. I was doing a series on church history, in which I would bring boxes of books and read the material from them about the various church groups.

One night I had an unusually large box full of books and was dutifully plowing my way through the material.

I thought I was making unusually good time with the material. We began at 7:30 p.m. About 10:30 p.m. Mr. Tkach began feeling sorry for the people as they had to go to work the next morning, so when I would look down to read from the books, Mr. Tkach was dismissing the people: "Go, go, go."

They were squatting down and turkey-walking between the rows to the exit. As I would look up I noticed the crowd was getting somewhat smaller. I thought the material was interesting. Was it really that boring?

Then I would duck my head to read some more and Mr. Tkach would dismiss more brethren. Finally, I asked someone what time it was and they said it was about 11:30 p.m.!

Not until the last few years at a Ministerial Refreshing Program did Mr. Tkach reveal to me that he had been dismissing the people as I was reading.

## Q&A: Taking a look at pagan worship practices and customs

Continued from page 2

### that it is sinful to have Christian celebrations on days that used to be celebrated in honor of false gods?

God, through Moses, tells us: "Be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.' You must not worship the Lord your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods."

Do these verses mean that we cannot do anything pagans did in worship? Of course not, for pagans prayed, sang hymns, played musical instruments and drank wine, and some baptized by immersion. They also had priesthoods, special garments, temples, altars and sacrifices. They had annual festivals in conjunction with the agricultural seasons. None of these practices are wrong. Some are even an essential part of Christianity.

Since Deuteronomy 12 does not forbid all pagan worship practices, then what does it forbid? The context clarifies the concern when it gives the reason for the prohibition: "because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates." The problem isn't worship—the problem is detestable worship practices. The example cited in verse 31 is child sacrifice; temple prostitution would be another.

If we go back to the beginning of the chapter, we will see the context. The primary concern throughout the chapter is the location of worship. God instructed the Israelites to destroy all Canaanite high places and altars and idols. Instead, the Israelites were to make all their sacrifices at one site. This would make it difficult for anyone to worship other gods. This emphasized the fact that there was only one God, not dozens of deities each having power over small areas.

In Canaanite religion, and in many other pagan religions, the people

thought that various gods had power in various places. The god that was most influential in one area might not have as much influence in another. So people made sacrifices in their own areas to appease the local gods.

If the people offered acceptable sacrifices, they expected the gods to respond by giving them whatever they wanted. In effect, their worship was an attempt to tell their gods what to do. That's why they sacrificed sons and daughters in the fire—a costly sacrifice like that would guarantee that they would get what they desired from the gods.

Canaanite religion also included cultic prostitution. If the people wanted fertility, they performed sex acts in their worship. They thought that if they did their part, then Baal would do his. Anthropologists call it a system of sympathetic magic. It was really an attempt to control and manipulate the gods.

The Canaanite concept of gods was defective, and their concept of worship was also defective. Their theology led to detestable practices, and that is why God wanted the Israelites to destroy the pagan altars and not to copy their worship methods.

Deuteronomy 12 clearly does not apply to every worship practice. The context connects it with places of sacrifice and with child sacrifice. It is concerned with things that are detestable or abominable—things that God hates. There is no hint in the text that the day of the year was of any concern.

Actually, since OT worship days were connected to agricultural seasons, and Canaanite worship was also based on agricultural seasons, it is likely that there were some similarities in the days being observed. God's condemnation of pagan worship practices was based not on dates, but on whether the customs were detestable irrespective of dates.

Canaanite religion was superstitious about worship locations and the effectiveness of sacrifices and rituals. But on the other side of the coin, it would be superstitious for us to avoid everything that pagans did simply because they did it—because

that would include prayer, hymns and marriage ceremonies. We cannot let centuries-dead pagans dictate what we do or what we avoid.

It is not wrong to rejoice that Jesus was born, but it is superstitious to think that we should avoid this subject on one particular day. It would also be wrong to think that we must celebrate a particular day the Bible does not require. It would also be a mistake to restrict our joy concerning Christ's birth to one season of the year.

It is not wrong for families and friends to exchange gifts whenever they wish, but it is superstitious to think that it is OK to do this on 364 days a year, but wrong on one. If a practice is detestable, it is detestable in any time or place. If wrong things are done on Dec. 25, for example, then we should criticize whatever is wrong, not the date on which it is done.

### Is it wrong to do things that were once part of pagan worship customs?

Pagan worship practices included prayer, music and offerings. Those practices are not sinful in themselves, and we see biblical examples of them being used in worship of the true God. Pagans conducted marriage ceremonies and used wedding rings, but we may also have them even though the Bible does not command them.

Pagans also had many funeral customs, such as embalming, ceremonies and giving of flowers. Even though these common customs were shaped by non-Christian ideas about the afterlife, and these customs continue to be used by non-Christians, we may, and do, use them in Christian ceremonies without indicating any agreement with the originating beliefs.

Pagans dedicated certain days of the week to their gods, and we use these names today without implying idolatry on our part. Pagans created statues of people and animals, but that does not mean that we cannot. These customs have lost their pagan connotations and have become religiously neutral. It is not sinful, for example, for an architect to copy the pillars found in Greek and Roman temples. Things that were once "pagan" do not

necessarily remain pagan.

In the United States, no one would think it odd for a Christian to have a small ornamental figurine of a bird or animal. In Moses' day, however, such statues may have been seen as inappropriate. Whether something has pagan connotations is often cultural. What is acceptable in one nation or century may be frowned upon in another. But we do not have to be restricted by erroneous concepts of the past.

We can make decisions about embalming, burial, caskets, crypts, cremation and flowers without having to investigate which of these customs originated in paganism. It is even possible to use these things in religious ceremonies without fear of contamination or compromise.

Of course, some people are uncomfortable with customs such as wedding rings and cremation. Others are not. Different people draw their "lines" in different places, but they need to respect each other's beliefs.

The advice of Romans 14:6-13 applies to such matters: "He who participates does so to the Lord. He who abstains does so to the Lord. So then, why do you judge your brother? Each of us has to give our own account to God. Therefore, do not pass judgment on one another, and do not put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way."

The principles given in 1 Corinthians 8:4, 7 are also adaptable: "So then, about participating in customs that were once associated with the worship of idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they participate they think of an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled." Paul explained that Christians had freedom in this matter, but he cautioned them to be careful with their freedom (verse 9).

Basically, we can live without worrying about what pagans did or did not do. If the behavior is wrong, it is wrong for us to do it whether or not pagans did

See Q & A, page 10

# Members comment on the late pastor general

Following are comments about Joseph W. Tkach that were included in condolence and sympathy cards sent to the Tkach family.

We appreciate the example of how we should walk in the footprints of Christ that Mr. Tkach provided. He was a man of integrity and full of courage.

Mr. and Mrs. Larry Clark  
De Soto, Kansas

Your dad will be sorely missed. I had an opportunity to meet him and I found him to be a loving and giving person. I believe that God used him in a special way to bring the church into a bright future of showing love and outgoing concern for everyone no matter the race, creed or color. Under his leadership with Christ as the head, he has given true meaning to unity and fellowship.

Mr. and Mrs. Willie Wright  
Rome, Georgia

Mr. Tkach was certainly an inspiration and role model to emulate. His warmth and love, dedication and hard work will always be remembered by fellow church members. Also his courage to point out wrong doctrine and stick to it, regardless of criticism.

Audrey Percy  
Paducah, Kentucky

I am a former member of the Worldwide Church of God and although I never met him in person, he seemed to be such a caring and down to earth man.

Mrs. Gordon Schroeder  
Jacobsburg, Ohio

Your father's example has helped all of us to grow in faith and strength. We will miss him very much. He truly was a valiant servant and soldier in our Lord.

Robert Walton  
Jacksonville, North Carolina

Mr. Tkach was a wonderful loving man. He loved God, the church, his

enemies and all of us from the greatest to the least. We will miss him. His selfless love for Christ has laid the foundation for a golden age in God's church. What a wonderful tribute to him and Christ.

Mr. and Mrs. David Gibb  
Gaffney, South Carolina

I held your dad in great esteem. I'm glad God used him so well in bringing us close to himself. I'm also glad he was able to witness some of the fruit of his labor before his death. I will miss him.

Mary Crawford  
Mason City, Iowa

My life will never be the same because of Mr. Tkach. I thank God for what he showed us, the Bible truths and his outstanding example.

Janie Berkowitz  
Wantage, New Jersey

I had always admired Mr. Tkach for his leadership, and I came to respect him more and more as he demonstrated such courage in the face of so much adversity. He will be missed much.

Esther Halvorson  
Bellingham, Washington

Mr. Tkach was of tremendous encouragement to us. God gave him such a capacity to express, to live and to love in humility and integrity. It is hard to believe he is gone. We will truly miss him and the loving guidance we received through him.

Mr. and Mrs. Tim Reinagel  
Friendship, New York

Mr. Tkach will always be remembered for his outgoing love, his labor of love and for his kindness and thoughtfulness. He really lived a Christian life. He gave of himself, he practiced what he preached, and he cared. He taught us so much, what love is all about, how to put into practice that love toward the whole world. He has strengthened and encouraged us all.

Mr. Tkach has completed what God gave him to do. I can hear God say, "Thank you for a job well done."

Mr. and Mrs. Ted Saunders  
Renton, Washington

Mr. Tkach has given his all. I have great admiration and respect for his willingness to follow where God led him. He had great courage in the face of such terrible opposition.

I am so grateful to him, and to God, for showing us about the new covenant and its indescribable blessings. It seems that there is new life in the church since the changes began, and I feel with many others that Mr. Tkach was instrumental in lifting our load.

Nina Prouty  
South Bend, Washington

We thought so much about Mr. Tkach. He was a wonderful person and the church grew under his leadership. He will be sadly missed by all of those who knew him. We do share in the pain and the sorrow you are feeling.

Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Bremer  
Danville, Indiana

Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm. Mr. Tkach held a steady course to truth and liberty when God's church was violently tossed about by storms of doubt, deceit and disbelief.

Now he has reached the safe harbor, his victory won, laid down his arms to rest. What a glorious awakening when he receives his reward.

Arlene Shaffer  
Pulaski, Pennsylvania

Mr. Tkach helped me through his friendship and genuine love and concern. He will always be a part of my life. Mr. Tkach, with God's guidance, has directed the church with true love.

Mr. and Mrs. Mike Hogan  
Cape Canaveral, Florida

When Mr. Tkach took office in 1986, I felt for the first time that I had a hammer in my hand to help build the church, no longer did it seem the work was drawing to a close, but was just beginning.

Before he died, he released me from a weight that was fast becoming too heavy to bear, and opened the doors to joy in Christ I never dreamed I'd have. In the

past week, I've thought in great sadness, how can we bear to lose such a man.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Taylor  
Villa Park, Illinois

Mr. Tkach was a good man, and you don't need me to tell you this. He took time out of his busy schedule to write me and was concerned about my health as I have diabetes and high blood pressure. I will always cherish Mr. Tkach's letter.

Sam Howard  
(Member on death row)

I hope these words will comfort you as much as we were comforted by your dad's card he sent us in June when my mom died. We always felt the love he felt for us in the words he wrote and we will miss him greatly.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Hammonds  
Ennis, Texas

Mr. Tkach's loving and compassionate vision set thousands of people free from a binding legalism that inevitably stops spiritual growth at some point. His leadership will be missed, it must be difficult to face walking in his footsteps.

Annette Smith  
Memphis, Tennessee

Mr. Tkach was a wonderful person and a great leader. We respected him deeply for his courage and faithfulness in leading the church.

Mr. and Mrs. Larry Johnson  
Brandon, Florida

Mr. Tkach was a dedicated man and served God loyally in so many ways. He was also a man of courage to follow his convictions and inspired understanding of God's word regardless of the cost. He was truly a man of God and an inspiration to so many.

Iris Coman  
Mayer, Arizona

We really thought Mr. Tkach was an awesome person with tremendous love for all. We will surely miss him.

Mr. and Mrs. Mark Mansanarez  
Driggs, Idaho

## Paganism: What is the Christian approach in the world today?

Continued from page 4

box explaining Deuteronomy 12:30.

The summary is that God does not object to all worship practices of the pagans (such as prayer, sacrifices and temples), but only the abominations that they did in worship. Basically, if it's wrong, it's wrong on any day of the year. That's the kind of customs we need to beware of.

But if a custom is harmless in July (decorating the house with colored lights, for example), then we needn't condemn it in December. We can't let centuries-dead pagans dictate what we can or can't do.

So we have to narrow things down: If Christmas is a sin, just where is the sin? Is it a sin for the church to have worship services on this date? Is it a sin to celebrate the birth of the "Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4:2)? Is it a sin to celebrate his birth on this particular date? Is it a sin to celebrate this date to the exclusion of

others?

Eastern Orthodox Christians, for example, may observe Jan. 6 as a festival for the birth of Christ. They were not influenced by Rome or Saturnalia. Is it OK to observe this date, or do we feel a compulsion to dig into history looking for something bad about this day so we can disqualify it? Do we feel a compulsion to ask whether the meat has been sacrificed to an idol?

**Let's summarize:**

- 1) It is not wrong to rejoice at the birth of Jesus.
  - 2) It is not wrong to do this every year.
  - 3) It is not wrong to add a religious festival.
  - 4) The date of Dec. 25 isn't necessarily pagan.
  - 5) Even if the date is pagan, it isn't automatically wrong to use things that used to be pagan, such as wedding rings, funeral customs, statues and the names of days.
- If the date is permissible and

church services are permissible, but certain customs are not, then we ought to specify which customs are ungodly rather than just condemning everything associated with the date.

If a fat man in a red suit is permissible, but fables about him are not, then we need to identify the sin without condemning the harmless. Of course, different Christians will draw the lines in different places, and we need to get along with each other.

**Conclusion**

Paganism is an emotion-laden subject. We have a history of being dogmatic, legalistic and of misusing the Scriptures when we argue our point. With that history, of course, it is impossible to discuss this subject without somebody disagreeing. Each person thinks himself to be properly balanced—but each person's balance point is different. Equally sincere people draw lines in different places. What then are we to do?

Should the church legislate about which practices are OK and which are not? That is not our commission. We are not in the Talmud business. Each Christian should draw his or her own lines, and be tolerant of those who draw different lines. Do not judge your brother, Paul says (Romans 14:5-13). That is one of the most difficult commandments in the entire Bible!

We do not want members to be offended. Those who participate should be cautious; those who see others participating should be tolerant. No one has to participate. But we should not condemn those who do—including people in our own fellowship who choose to do certain things on Dec. 24 or 25.

Just as in the matter of makeup and birthdays, some will do it one way and some will do it another. Whether you participate or whether you abstain, do it all to the Lord, and let him be the judge. This is the Christian approach to the cultural situation today.



# Q&A: The new covenant has been made

Continued from page 8

it. If it is not wrong, we may do it whether or not the pagans did it first.

**Hebrews 8:11 says, "No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest." Doesn't this verse prove that the new covenant isn't established, since not everyone knows the Lord?**

First, we must understand the context of the verse. Hebrews is a book that compares and contrasts an old order with a new order. It shows that Jesus Christ is superior to the angels, Moses and the Aaronic priesthood, and he is the mediator of a better covenant.

After drawing these comparisons and contrasts, the author shows that something was wrong with the old order, the old covenant (Hebrews 8:7). The flaw of that covenant was with the people

(verse 8). In light of this, God announced that he would establish a new covenant. This covenant would include better promises.

In verses 8-12, the author quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34, which is a prophecy about a new covenant. This covenant focuses on three things: God will write his laws on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10), knowledge of the Lord will be available from the least to the greatest (verse 11) and our sins will be remembered no more (verse 12). Verse 13 ends the section by stating that the first covenant is obsolete. We are now under the new covenant.

The author quotes part of Jeremiah's prophecy again in Hebrews 10:15-18. In this passage he clearly believes that the forgiveness of sins has been effected, implying that the other aspect of Jeremiah's prophecy has been fulfilled, too.

In using Jeremiah's prophecy, the author shows that in the old covenant, people did not personally

know the Lord because they had to be taught about him. Human mediation accompanied the old covenant. Knowledge of God was made possible through the priesthood. Instead of the law being internalized or written on the "inward parts," the people memorized the law as an external code. This resulted in a knowledge about God but not a personal relationship with him.

Under the new covenant, believers know the Lord through a personal relationship with him. Jeremiah's new covenant prophecy says that those who know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, will know the Lord in a superior way. Believers know the Lord without a required human mediation or the memorization of an external code.

In the new covenant there is no privileged class who alone could teach others to know the Lord, no class distinctions by age or sex or race, but the knowledge of God is available to everyone across the whole range of humanity. All in the

Body of Christ are on an equal footing through a common and personal knowledge of God (see Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, volume 15, page 177).

The church still looks forward to the fulfillment of all the promises of the new covenant. Many blessings do await, and they are new covenant blessings. It is important to remember that covenants, like promises, are made before they are fulfilled. For instance, part of the Abrahamic covenant began to be fulfilled centuries after it had been made.

The prophecy that the new covenant would be made has been fulfilled, for the new covenant has been made. The new covenant has begun to be fulfilled, but it has not been completely fulfilled yet, for not all the promises have been completed. But it is still correct to say that the new covenant has been made, even though many people do not yet know the Lord.

## Letters of sympathy and encouragement

Dear Joe,

I received a fax from Tom Lapacka late yesterday, informing me of your father's death. This must be a great blow to you as well as to the entire leadership of the Worldwide Church of God.

I thank God for your father's moral courage in leading the church in the way he did, using Scripture as his only yardstick, and not being afraid to discard traditions when he discovered truth. I know that you were an important part of that process, and the mantle is now on your shoulders. I pray God to give you the strength to continue in his footsteps.

May God strengthen you with his love and grace. And may you find comfort in the blessed hope of our Lord's coming and the resurrection to eternal life of all who love him.

Sincerely,  
David Neff

Christianity Today Executive Editor

Gentlemen,

I read with sadness your fax of Saturday, Sept. 23. Our thoughts and prayers are with you during this great time of loss. Only from the perspective of eternity will people fully grasp the significance of Joseph Tkach's ministry. The changes made in the Worldwide Church of God under his leadership and yours will live on through the lives of people worldwide. We especially now pray for Joseph as he continues on under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

If there is anything tangible we can do to assist you or to comfort you during your time of loss, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With warmest regards,  
Hendrik Hanegraaff

Christian Research Institute President

Aug. 11

Dear Mr. Tkach,

You no doubt have heard of the man who wanted to be a procrastinator but kept putting it off! Perhaps that refers to me as I have been meaning to write to you long before this.

It is to tell you how pleased I have been each time I read your "Personal" column in *The Plain Truth*.

Having been raised all my life in mainstream Christian beliefs I have been excited to see the move on your part to this theology and how Christ is the cen-

ter including his death and resurrection.

I have read about the fall-off in your church and feel that it can only be a temporary situation as these people get to know the real truth. I commend you with great admiration for your stand and trust that God will bring back the drifters as well as many new believers.

Yesterday I had the privilege of again visiting my "old haunts" to record a commercial for New Zealand. I must say it was good to be back! I stopped in to see you before going into the studio and had a nice talk with lovely Amy. She is a jewel! However I was saddened to learn of your problem. You shall definitely be in my daily prayers for a speedy and complete recovery. You are a very special person—a beacon for all of us to follow. My very best wishes to you and your family.

Sincerely,  
Art Gilmore

Dear Mr. Tkach,

You may remember that we met you with Jack Kessler and family a few years ago at our home in Malibu, and then on another occasion in your office in Pasadena. We have just come back from an extended research trip in Europe and Syria, and we have learnt the sad news that your father has recently passed away. With my wife, I would like to extend to you my most sincere expressions of sympathy.

Our long-standing association with the Ambassador Foundation has led us to appreciate from within the objectives and goals which your father embodied so well, and to develop a strong sense of personal friendship for so many within the church, and thus indirectly for him as well.

It is in this spirit of a shared affinity for values that, while conveying to you our condolences and the promise of our sincere Christian prayer, we also wish you the strength you and your family need in such a difficult moment.

With kindest regards, I remain,  
Very sincerely yours,

Professor Giorgio Buccellati  
University of California, Los Angeles

Dear Mr. Lapacka,

Thank you so much for your note of Sept. 23, with the news release regarding the death of Joseph W. Tkach.

Please accept my condolences, both personally and on behalf of Fuller Theological Seminary, on this significant loss for your church.

We at Fuller Seminary have been pleased at the theological developments that have occurred under Mr. Tkach's leadership, and we hope that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide your group as you wrestle with important questions about how you can best serve the cause of the Gospel.

Please be assured of our sincere sympathy and our best wishes to you and to your colleagues.

Sincerely,  
President Richard J. Mouw  
Fuller Theological Seminary

Dear Joe,

On behalf of the General Conference Board of Directors of the Church of God (Seventh Day), I would like to express my deepest sympathy to you and your family at the passing of your father.

I met briefly with your dad during my visit to your campus in April 1994. He struck me as a remarkable individual, full of compassion for people and love for Jesus. His was an awesome responsibility, and many among us admired his willingness to rise to the challenge of his convictions. May the fruit of his labor increase in abundant blessings upon your church in the days to come. Congratulations to you on your new assignment. Our prayers are with you as you pick up where your dad left off.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
Whaid G. Rose  
Board Chairman,  
Church of God (Seventh Day)

Dear Brethren,

On behalf of the churches of the Baptist General Conference, I want to commend you for your journey of faith.

You are courageous and an example for many.

I want to be among those who reach out with open arms as part of the family of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yours in Christ,  
President Bob Ricker  
Baptist General Conference

Dear Pastor General Tkach,

I just heard the news of your father's passing. The members of Sherman Oaks

Lutheran Church and Children's Center wish to be among those offering sincere sympathy at this time.

One did not have to know your father personally to realize how much he will be missed and mourned in the religious community for which he did so much. His mantle has now been passed on and it is with our many prayers for your leadership and church this letter is sent. As you may already know, he will always be remembered in history as the central figure who brought your church body into the truth found in Jesus Christ alone.

In the love and friendship of Christ  
Reverend George Mather, Pastor  
Sherman Oaks Lutheran Church and  
Children's Center

Sept. 21

Dear Mr. Tkach,

Her Majesty the Queen asks me to convey to you her sincere appreciation for the beautiful card that you had sent for her birthday.

Her Majesty has just recently learnt about your illness which led to two major surgeries. Although the process of healing might be painful, Her Majesty is happy to hear that you are recovering well. Her Majesty hopes that your complete recovery will be smooth and less painful as time goes by.

Sincerely yours,  
Pharani Mahanonda  
Deputy Private Secretary to  
Her Majesty the Queen, Thailand

To: Ambassador Foundation

I am sorry to hear the news about the death of Mr. Joseph W. Tkach. Wat Thai of Los Angeles has a long relationship with Ambassador Foundation and the Worldwide Church of God that began many years ago with Mr. Armstrong.

We always appreciate the friendship shown to the Thai people carried on by Mr. Tkach.

On behalf of the Wat Thai of Los Angeles and the Thai community, I wish to extend our sincerest condolences to Mrs. Tkach, the entire Tkach family and our many friends of the foundation and church.

Sincerely,  
In the Dhamma,  
Phra Dhammarajuwat  
President Wat Thai of Los Angeles

# Announcements

BIRTHS, ENGAGEMENTS, WEDDINGS, ANNIVERSARIES AND OBITUARIES

## Births

**ABNEY, Alan and Teresa (Saylor)** of Lexington, Kentucky, girl, Jessica Elaine, July 10, first child.

**BALDASSARRE, Joseph and Julie (Laverde)** of Boston, Massachusetts, girl, Stephanie Mae, May 7, first child.

**BARR, Derek and Julie (Nakashima)** of Buena Park, California, boy, Cameron Reece, Oct. 12, now 2 boys.

**BAUKNIGHT, Jimmy and Tracie (Walker)** of Fort Myers, Florida, girl, Rachel Olivia, Sept. 30, first child.

**BEEM, Jesse and Robin (Branam)** of Hornick, Iowa, girl, Julia Paige, Oct. 23, now 1 boy, 2 girls.

**BIBINSKI, Paul and Laurie (Kline)** of Boston, Massachusetts, girl, Katelyn Marie, Sept. 24, now 2 girls.

**CHRISTIAN, Marty and Carolyn (Casillas)** of Olympia, Washington, boy, Connor James, Aug. 21, first child.

**COCOMISE, Bill and Dawn (Urbanek)** of Chicago, Illinois, boy, William Rudolf, June 20, first child.

**EISENHAUER, Fred and Krista (Larson)** of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, girl, Leah Claire, Aug. 2, now 1 boy, 1 girl.

**EUGENIO, Fidelio and Maria-Rosario (Mantala)** of Montreal, Quebec, boy, Jared Jacob, Oct. 7, now 2 boys, 1 girl.

**FAISON, James and Tanzie (Marshall)** of Fort Riley, Kansas, girl, Jasmine Jenelle, Sept. 12, now 2 girls.

**FLORY, Eldon and Christina (Wheeler)** of Topeka, Kansas, boy, Micah Lee, Sept. 24, first child.

**FOUCRAS, Francois and Susy (Valence)** of France, boy, Joshua, Sept. 28.

**FRALEY, Ronnie and Michelle (Penkava)** of Greensboro, North Carolina, girl, Mariah Michelle, Oct. 20, first child.

**FRANTZ, Eric and Diane (Geiser)** of Louisville, Kentucky, boy, Morgan Alexander, Sept. 28, girl, first child.

**FREEMAN, Paul and Tina (Howard)** of Monticello, Arkansas, girl, Christina Grace, Sept. 8, now 3 boys, 1 girl.

**GUNN, Jimmy and Denise (McClellon)** of Demorest, Georgia, girl,

Harley Gabrielle, Oct. 4, now 1 boy, 1 girl.

**HANSON, Andrew and Lisa (Larson)** of Las Vegas, Nevada, girl, Amanda Jade, Aug. 4, first child.

**HOFER, David and Mitzi (Garber)** of Squamish, British Columbia, girl, Kimberly Gail, March 13, now 1 boy, 2 girls.

**HOFER, Mark and Jodi (Day)** of Des Moines, Iowa, boy, Zakery Dallas, May 29, first child.

**KYLE, Jason and Laura (Locklear)** of Youngstown, Ohio, girl, Albany Lauren, Aug. 8, now 1 boy, 1 girl.

**LANDRAU, Alex and April (Martin)** of Marysville, California, girl, Makenzie Marie, Sept. 28, first child.

**LINDON, Ashley and Lynn (Christie)** of Toowoomba, Australia, girl, Alex Kate, Aug. 15, now 2 boys, 2 girls.

**MOLNAR, Dave and Julie (Thomas)** of Columbus, Ohio, girl, Leanna Dawn, Sept. 22, now 1 boy, 2 girls.

**MULLINS, Tracey and Melissa (Brock)** of Pound, Virginia, girl, Fallon Elizabeth Hope, Sept. 29, now 1 boy, 1 girl.

**POLIWCZYNSKI, John and Jane (Peek)** of Hartford, Michigan, boy, Marek, Sept. 28, now 3 boys, 1 girl.

**RICE, Sean and Paula (Miller)** of Las Vegas, Nevada, boy, Sean Steven II, July 15, now 1 boy, 1 girl.

**ROBINSON, David and Kayleane (Gee)** of Melbourne, Australia, boy, Daniel Jordan, Aug. 16, now 1 boy, 1 girl.

**SCHILLER, David and Julie (Anderson)** of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, boy, Ryan Dakota, Sept. 26, first child.

**SMITH, Peter and Marin (Nel)** of Kadoma, Zimbabwe, boy, Leon Christoffel, April 25, now 2 boys.

**TAYLOR, Timothy and Rebekah (Greupink)** of Waukesha, Wisconsin, boy, Jake Austin, Aug. 28, first child.

**WHITE, Jonathan and Rebecca (Smith)** of Cambridge, Ohio, boy, Spencer Alexander William, Aug. 7, now 2 boys.

**WISDOM, Clive and Rosie (Quinn)** of Dublin, Ireland, boy, Alexander Christian Thomas, Aug. 10, now 1 boy, 2 girls.

**WORKMAN, Brian and Michelle (Dorton)** of Pikeville, Kentucky, girl, Cacee RaChelle, May 13, first child.

**YELVERTON, Dean and Andria (LaLonde)** of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, boy, Ian Andrew, Aug. 23, first child.

## Engagements

Mr. and Mrs. Morris Rowland of Indianapolis, Indiana, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Joy to Chris Wilson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Warren Wilson of Clarksburg, West Virginia. A summer wedding in Indianapolis is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Fraser of Hazlet, New Jersey, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Lesley Ann to Philip Chartier, son of Ralph and Miriam Chartier of Staten Island, New York. A February wedding is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Whitehead of Sidney, Iowa, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Vicki Lynn to Mark Andrew Arner, son of Mr. and Mrs. Radford Arner of Big Sandy. A May 26 wedding in Omaha, Nebraska, is planned.

Mr. and Mrs. B. Kebbache of Paris, France, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Hafida Stephanie to Peter Edwin Goodchild, son of Val and Ken Goodchild, of Bideford, Devon, England. A Dec. 17 wedding is planned in Paris.

Ronald and Jane Stahl of Acme, Pennsylvania, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Ronda Jane to William Bryce Cooksey of Big Sandy, son of Ariene Cooksey of Arlington, Texas, and William Arthur Cooksey of Fayetteville, Arkansas. A May wedding is planned in Acme, Pennsylvania.

## Weddings

**ANDRE & LORI PITTARD**  
Lori Ann Kuberski of Edmonton, Alberta, and Andre James Pittard of Auckland, New Zealand, were united in marriage Aug. 13. The ceremony was performed by Gary Moore, pastor of the Edmonton churches. Emma Rodgers and Michele Kuberski attended the bride. Dharmesh Chandra was best

man. The couple plan to live in Australia.



**OLUWASEGUN & BOLATITO IBIROGBA**

Bolatito Ojo, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ojo of Igbajo in Oshun State, Nigeria, and Oluwasegun Ibirogba, son of Ibukunoluwa and Monisola Ibirogba of Lagos State, Nigeria, were united in marriage June 25 in Lagos. The ceremony was performed by Emmanuel Okai, pastor of the Lagos church. Chief bridesmaid was Uche Abani, and Frank Ogiamen was best man. The couple live in Ikeja, Nigeria.



**CHARLES & KAREN SHEPHERD**

Karen Mower of Columbia Falls, Montana, and Charles Shepherd of Boise, Idaho, were united in marriage June 24. The ceremony was performed by Norm Strayer, pastor of the Kalispell and Missoula, Montana churches. The bride's son, Cliff, gave his mom away. Dianna Whitlock was maid of honor, and Lindsey Shepherd was the bridesmaid. Austin Shepherd was best man, and Ben Shepherd was the groomsmen. The couple live in Bellevue, Idaho.



**GEORGE & JOYCE COOPER**

Joyce Ann White, daughter of Sam and Helen White of Baltimore, Maryland, and George Arthur Cooper, parents deceased, of Casper, Wyoming, were united in marriage July 2. The ceremony was performed by Ron Felling, associate pastor of the Baltimore, Maryland, church. Lou Wonder Kennedy was matron of honor, and Paul Pedersen was best man. The couple will live in Baltimore.



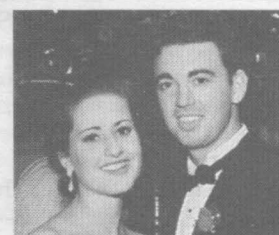
**CRAIG & TERESA DeFERE**

Teresa Verdusco, daughter of Linda Bethke of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Craig DeFere, son of Lawrence and Bernadine DeFere of Mukwanago, Wisconsin, were united in marriage June 25. The ceremony was performed by Dave Fiedler, pastor of the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, West church. Laura Johnson, aunt of the bride, was matron of honor, and Clifford DeFere, brother of the groom, was best man. The couple live in Hartland, Wisconsin.



**PHILIP & MILAGROS NEVES**

Milagros Colon, daughter of Juan and Ana Colon of Barranquitas, Puerto Rico, and Philip Neves, son of Woodrow and Mary E. Neves of St. Petersburg, Florida, were united in marriage June 11. The ceremony was performed by Fred Lopez, pastor of the San Juan, Puerto Rico, church. Audrey Huntley was maid of honor, and Raul Colon was best man. The couple live in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.



**PATRICK & CLAIRE JONES**

Claire Michelle Stevens, daughter of Robert and Carol Stevens of Perth, Australia, and Patrick Anthony "Tony" Jones, son of Pat and Allene Jones of Austell, Georgia, were united

in marriage May 16 in Tyler, Texas. The ceremony was performed by James Kisse, counselor and assistant professor of psychology at Ambassador University. Naomi Carlisle was maid of honor, and Joe Emmerth was best man. The couple live in Perth, Australia.

## Anniversaries



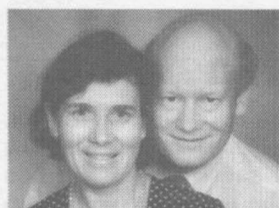
**LANDY & RACHAEL ROBERTS**

Landy "Bert" and Rachael Roberts of Houston, Texas, celebrated their 30th anniversary Sept. 4. They have two sons, Michael and Dennis; and five grandchildren.



**KEN & JOY SLADE**

Ken and Joy Slade of Bendigo, Australia, celebrated their 30th anniversary Sept. 12. They have four children, Jeffrey, David, Debbie Keeble and Ruth Pezzaniti; a daughter-in-law, Monika; two sons-in-law, Rod Keeble and Joe Pezzaniti; and three grandchildren, Kathleen-Rose, Rebecca and Jessica.



**DAVE & JUDY BOARDMAN**

Dave and Judy Boardman of Shrewsbury, England, celebrated their 25th anniversary Sept. 11. They have two sons, Daniel and James. Dave is a deacon in the Stoke, England, church.



**DAVID & EVALYN EHLERS**

David T. and Evalyn Ehlers of Lakeland, Florida, celebrated their 30th anniversary Sept. 19. They have two daughters and sons-in-law, Malinda and Todd Guy and Lenora and Lee Kimes; three sons and a daughter-in-law, Nathanael and Holly Anne, David Paul and Robert; and two grandchildren, Benjamin and Rebecca Guy.



**BEN & ANNA GORDON**

Ben and Anna Gordon of Glasgow, Scotland, celebrated their 40th anniversary Sept. 10.



**JUNIOR & EDITH MARTIN**

Junior and Edith Martin of Louisville, Kentucky, celebrated their 35th anniversary June 24. They have four children, Peggy Head, Terri Blain, Mickey and Brenda; two sons-in-law; one daughter-in-law; and five grandchildren, Wendy, Amber, Jacob, Isaiah and Jeremy.



**DANIEL & EVELYN ROBINSON**

Daniel and Evelyn Robinson of Lan-

caster, California, celebrated their 40th anniversary May 21. They have four sons, Mark, Roy, Willie and Daniel Jr.; three daughters-in-law, Barbara, Karen and Cheryl; and five grandchildren, Shelly, Jennifer, Joey, Krista and Christopher.

## Anniversaries Made of Gold



**MR. & MRS. PAUL VOLPE**

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Volpe of Gainesville, Florida, celebrated their 50th anniversary Dec. 4. They have one son, Paul Jr.; two daughters and two sons-in-law, Stephanie and Michael DiGennaro and Grace and Mario Cava; and five grandchildren, Grace McLoughlin, Stephanie DiGennaro, Robert, Lisa and Mario Cava Jr.



**MR. & MRS. BENNIE TAULBEE**

Mr. and Mrs. Bennie Taulbee of Escondido, California, celebrated their 52nd anniversary Sept. 25 in Hot Springs, Arkansas. They have three sons, Larry, Glenn and Jack; twin daughters, Sheila and Sherri; four grandsons; three granddaughters; and three great-grandchildren.



**CHARLES & LUCILLE JOHNSON**

Charles and Lucille Johnson of Wenonah, New Jersey, celebrated their 50th anniversary Sept. 4.



**JOSIAH & DORIS FARNEY**

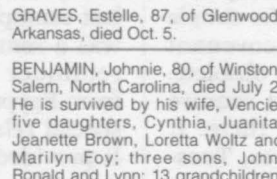
Josiah and Doris Farney of Wenonah, New Jersey, celebrated their 50th anniversary Oct. 13.

## Obituaries



**ARTHUR THOMAS**

THOMAS, Arthur S. 90, of Grand Junction, Michigan, died Aug. 28. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth; four daughters and their husbands, Evelyn and Bob Fahey, Phyllis and Ron Schemenauer, Ruth and George Crouse and Artis and Dave Roenspies; a son and his wife, Arthur and Janet; 20 grandchildren; and 15 great-grandchildren.



**GRAVES, Estelle, 87, of Glenwood, Arkansas, died Oct. 5.**

BENJAMIN, Johnnie, 80, of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, died July 2. He is survived by his wife, Vencie; five daughters, Cynthia, Juanita, Jeanette Brown, Loretta Woltz and Marilyn Foy; three sons, John, Ronald and Lynn; 13 grandchildren; two sisters; and a brother.



**DORIS TOTH**

TOTH, Doris, 67, of Sacramento, California, died July 7. She is survived by her husband, Michael; and three children, Barry, Barbara and Mark.

SAULNIER, Robert, 64, of Wye-bridge, Ontario, died of cancer Sept. 8. He is survived by his wife, Rita; two sons, Rob and Gordon; two daughters, Sandie Forget and Debbie Edwards; and six grandchildren.



**LEO McALPINE**

Leo McAlpine, 64, of Milford, Ontario, died of leukemia Aug. 22. He is survived by his wife, Celia; five children; and eight grandchildren. Leo served as a deacon in the Kingston, Ontario, church.

DEMERS, Joseph, 63, of Barrie, Ontario, died Aug. 18. He is survived by his wife, Margaret; five sons, Douglas, Paul, Stephen, Diane and Kelly; two daughters, Diane Richardson and Christine Bowler; and 13 grandchildren.

McDONAL, John H., 61, of Yuba City, California, died Sept. 26. He is survived by his wife, Ellen; a son, Bradley; a grandchild; his mother, Arlene Eubanks; and a sister, Jim Ann Burgett.



**JOHN MORRIS**

MORRIS, John R., 58, of Chicago, Illinois, died July 15 in the Chicago heat wave. He is survived by his father, John; four children, Glen, Adrien, John Stephen II and Elaine; a sister, Lillie Mae Smith; two brothers, Willie and John; an uncle, George; and five grandchildren.



**ANTHONY SCHMIDT**

SCHMIDT, Anthony "Tony," 52, of Sea Bright, New Jersey, died of a massive brain stem hemorrhage Sept. 12. He is survived by his wife, Darlene; two daughters, Mary Gusman and Christina Overbeck; two sons-in-law, Albert Gusman and Jeff Overbeck; three grandsons; his mother; three brothers; and three sisters.

TEURUAA, Lily Vaianuiti, 48, of Rarotonga, Cook Islands, died Aug. 22 of pneumonia. She is survived by four daughters, Telemoana, Lily, Sera and Teresa; nine grandchildren; two brothers; a sister; two uncles; an aunt; and many cousins, nephews and nieces.



**DAVID LICHTENSTEIN**

LICHTENSTEIN, David Jeffrey, 28, of Laguna Niguel, California, died Sept. 10 from complications of congenital hydrocephalus. He is survived by his father, James; his mother, Charlene Mathe; a brother, John; and a sister, Laura.



**EVAN BROWN**

BROWN, Evan Jason, 2, of Mount Airy, North Carolina, died Sept. 8 after surgery to correct a heart problem. He is survived by his parents, Jeff and Tara Mosley Brown; a brother, Ethan; grandparents, Jay and Thelma Mosley and Wayne and Barbara Brown; great-grandmothers, Virginia Mosley, Josephine Lawson and Ada Bell Brown; and a great-great-grandmother, Sadie Davis.

# Update

NEWS OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS

## Employees meet for first chapel service

About 150 employees and families met in the Auditori-

um for the first employee chapel at 4:15 p.m., Nov. 22. **Mike Hale**, a worship leader in the Pasadena church, led the audience in songs, the lyrics to many of which were displayed on screen.

Accompanied on piano by **Pat Reedy**, employees sang "All Hail the Power," "Crown Him With Many Crowns," "We Believe in God" and "Firm Foundation." Mr. Hale led the audience in prayer before singing "Give Thanks."

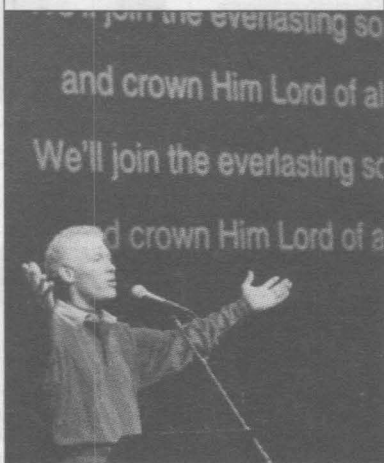
After 20 minutes of singing praises to God, Mr. Hale read Luke 17:11-17 about Jesus healing the 10 men of leprosy. Then Pastor General **Joseph Tkach** walked to the stage and said, "We are gathered here today to say thanks—to God, for what he's done, and for you employees and your diligent work."

Mr. Tkach spoke about expressing gratitude and how Jesus Christ in us instills a thankful spirit. "The priceless

gift of salvation is freely given to us without cost," he said. "Christ paid the price so we could freely have salvation."

He said the Psalms call us to verbalize our appreciation and thankfulness, not just feel it. He added that Satan's tool is discouragement, which erodes gratefulness.

After he prayed, Mr. Hale



Mike Hale leads hymns at headquarters chapel service.

led the audience in singing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

## Foundation projects canceled

**Russell Duke**, president of Ambassador University, announced to the student body in chapel Nov. 14 that the Ambassador Foundation projects were canceled because of insufficient funds to finance the 1996 year. The current volunteers will finish their positions as scheduled.

**Dan Thompson**, Jordan project director, encouraged the student body to fulfill Christ's commission to serve others and to look for local service opportunities.

CAD announced that it plans to have three sessions of the Summer Educational Program (SEP) next year.

## Singles event slated

KNOXVILLE, Tennessee—

Singles here invite you to a winter party Dec. 22 to 24 at Fall Creek Falls, Tennessee. Send \$35 payable to Knoxville Singles to **Carolyn McElhaney**, 7552 Glastonbury Dr., Knoxville, Tennessee, 37931, before Dec. 19. For more information call **Steve Isbill** at 1-423-983-2885 or **Dwight Allen** on the Internet at [dallen@utkvtx.utk.edu](mailto:dallen@utkvtx.utk.edu).

## Fresno to mark 40th

FRESNO, California—The church here will celebrate its 40th anniversary Jan 20. Members who have attended the Bakersfield, Visalia, Modesto and Sacramento congregations are invited. Write to the 40th Anniversary Committee at 3110 N. Harrison, Fresno, California, 93704. Tickets for dinner are \$22.25 for adults and \$10 for children under 12 and must be paid immediately.

## Personal: Christ, by bringing a new covenant, has transformed the law

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written law) avoid physical acts of adultery. The letter of this law is still valid. If we do not covet, then we will (without any need for a written law) not steal. This law is also valid in the letter. If we are not angry at our brother, we will (without any need for a written law) not murder. Again, the letter is valid. Keeping the spirit of the law has thwarted these sins at their very source.

However, consider how different the Feast of Unleavened Bread is. The spirit of the law is (in moral terms) that we repent of sin and (in Christological terms) that we partake of the sinless Bread of life.

If we are abiding by the spirit of the law, do we automatically (without any need for a written law) look to a calculated Jewish calendar, based on the agricultural seasons of Palestine, and observe a specific seven days of the year, specifically by avoiding bread made with yeast and avoiding work on the first and seventh days? This is not automatic at all. Rather, it is based exclusively on the written old covenant. In this case, there is a dramatic difference between the spirit and the letter of the law.

Or consider the old argument about whether we must live in booths during the Feast of Tabernacles, or the more recent argument about whether people who live at a Festival site must move out of their homes. The argument is missing the point. The tangled knot is cut by the simple observation that the new covenant says that the old contract is obsolete. The new contract does not require booths, nor does it forbid them. It says nothing about tomatoes, Tuesdays, or palm-branch sukkahs.

Instead, the new covenant requires us to remember always that we are strangers and pilgrims on this earth, journeying on our way to God's promised new earth (1 Peter 2:11; Philippians 3:20). Just as with phylacteries and tassels, if we keep this law in our hearts, we do not need to worry about the letter. The purpose has been fulfilled.

## Fulfillment in Jesus Christ

We know that sin offerings were

shadows of the real sacrifice for sin, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:1-3). Now that the real sacrifice for sin has been made, the physical symbolism does not need to be reenacted. But what about peace offerings and fellowship sacrifices? The New Testament doesn't specifically say that they are done away, but Jesus Christ fulfilled them, too. We keep these laws in the spirit, not in the letter.

Jesus has made atonement for us once for all, making us at one with the Father. We do not need to commemorate Christ's atonement with the goat rituals of Leviticus 16. Their purpose has been fulfilled, and the purpose for fasting on the 10th of Tishri (Leviticus 16:29-31) has also been fulfilled. Fasting is still a beneficial spiritual discipline—but it is neither commanded for nor restricted to the Day of Atonement.

Christ, by bringing a new covenant, has transformed the law. The same underlying law still exists—the law of love. Jesus did not change that law at all. Rather, he fulfilled it. The old covenant, including the sacrifices, tassels and Jubilee years, had specific, physical applications of the underlying law of love. But those specifics are, in many cases, now obsolete. The spirit of the law remains, but the letter does not. The old covenant way is not the only permissible application of the purpose of the law. There are other ways to achieve the same goal, to express our devotion to God and our love for our neighbors.

The Sabbath commandment, as our last example, had several purposes. It was a reminder of creation; it was a reminder of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt; it was a reminder of their special relationship with the Creator. It provided physical rest for animals, servants and families. And, although the old covenant does not stress this, it provided time for worship.

Morally, the Sabbath symbolized our duty to cease from evil works. Christologically, it symbolized our need to find spiritual rest in Christ, to trust in him rather than our own works for salvation. It symbolized the completion of our creation at the end of the age.

Now, if we have the spirit of the law written in our hearts, will we automatically, without need for writ-

ten instructions, refuse to work on a particular day of the week? Will we, from our hearts, know that holy time extends from evening to evening?

Will we automatically perceive that this specific time is so important that we should be willing to lose our jobs because of it? The answer is obvious: No. These things are not automatic even if our hearts are right with God. The spirit of the law does not automatically produce the letter—but Christians are to focus on the spirit.

## Perpetual remembrance

The real purpose is that we enter the rest of God through faith in Christ. Our salvation is in him, not in a specific day of the week. If we are in Christ and he is in us, we will always remember our special relationship with him. We will be in perpetual remembrance of the new creation being done in us.

We will cease from evil work every day of the week. We will do good works on every day of the week. We will worship on every day of the week. And we will also recognize that new covenant love should motivate us to meet with one another regularly to encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Resting on the Sabbath may picture a changed life, but then again, many Sabbath-keepers do not have changed lives. Moreover, Sabbath-keeping cannot change our hearts. Spiritual Sabbath-keeping, however, does change our hearts—because spiritual Sabbath-keeping means the life of faith in Christ, which changes us from the inside out. Jesus Christ has magnified the Sabbath law far beyond the temporal restrictions of the letter. If we are keeping the spirit of this law, the physical restrictions are not required. Of course, it is not wrong to rest on the Sabbath day. The physical benefits are still there. But it is wrong to see the physical as required for all Christians.

But, some will say, we should keep both the letter and the spirit of this law. It is easy to make that claim, but there is no proof for it—and there is certainly no reason to condemn people on the basis of a different interpretation of how we should obey God. It is just as easy to make the claim that people truly abiding by

the spirit of the tassels will also be wearing tassels. The flaw of such logic is exposed by the realization that the new covenant declares the old contract obsolete. We must focus on the spirit and purpose of the laws.

Our old approach to the Sabbath emphasized Matthew 5:17-19. We concluded that the old covenant laws were not obsolete, and that forced us to distort the meaning of such verses as Colossians 2:16 and Romans 14:5.

However, after we recognize that the letter of some OT laws is obsolete, then we realize that Matthew 5:17-19 has to be qualified or restricted in some way. So do Romans 3:20, 31; 7:12, 14 and other verses of continuity. These verses do not tell us which specific laws are still in force, and they do not prove the continued validity of any specific law.

Once we recognize that some OT laws, although still valid in purpose, are obsolete in the letter, then we are free to accept the implications of what Paul wrote in Colossians 2:16. We should not let anyone judge us regarding Sabbath days, just as we shouldn't let them judge us regarding new moons. Each person should be convinced in his own mind, but he should not judge his brother regarding such matters.

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