



In Brief...

Educating Christians for the Kingdom of God

A Personal Letter from John W. Ritenbaugh:

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Questions about what God is have been debated, sometimes violently, since men began searching for God. Obviously, we cannot see God, but if He has described Himself in the pages of the Bible, why should what He is be so difficult to fathom? Why argue about what the Bible says directly or implies in its terminology, visions, analogies and symbols?

Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Paul adds in I Corinthians 2:10-11 that God has revealed to us the mystery of His purpose by His Spirit.

Of course, Paul writes to converted people. Plainly, God does not hide Himself or what He is from those to whom He specifically reveals Himself and His Son (John 6:44; Matthew 11:27). So clear is God's revelation of Himself that Paul says that even the unconverted can understand much about Him through observation of His creation. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in [to, *margin*] them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen,

being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead [divine nature, *margin*]" (Romans 1:18-20).

Jesus' own testimony shows He came to reveal the Father. When asked by Philip to show them the Father, He replies, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:9). After combining Jesus' revelation of the Father with revelations through the prophets and apostles, a clear picture emerges of what one needs to know about God relative to salvation.

In His inspired revelation of Himself and His purpose, does God reveal Himself to be a trinity? Notice these quotations from a few authoritative sources: "Though 'trinity' is a second-century term found nowhere in the Bible, and the Scriptures present **no finished trinitarian statement**, the NT does contain most of the building materials for later doctrine" (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, "Trinity," p. 914. Author's emphasis throughout.).

"One does not find in the NT the trinitarian **paradox** of the coexistence of the Father, Son, and Spirit within a divine unity, the mystery of the three in one, yet one does find

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Post-War Parallels

One of baseball's fundamental rules is three outs end an inning. If the Western world were a baseball team, the side is just about retired.

This century has seen three world wars. Three? Yes. The two world wars have been hot wars—shooting wars—both won by the allied forces of America, Britain and France, among others. The third world war was the Cold War, ostensibly won by Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

Certain intriguing parallels among the aftermaths of these three wars may help us to see the path world events can follow in the years ahead. If man holds true to form, he will not learn from his failures and he will not avoid further misery and pain.

After each of these wars, leading statesmen and politicians have tried to create global cooperation institutions. American President Woodrow Wilson pushed a feeble League of Nations upon the world after World War I. His failed vision ended in World War II.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's

post-World War II plan, skeptically accepted by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in their statement of Allied war aims, paved the way for the United Nations. The UN, like its predecessor, is weak and meddling. Even in the Gulf War, the UN's role as a law-enforcing body was largely symbolic, as the real power came from the allied weaponry arrayed against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Over most of its history, the UN has acted as little more than a forum to showcase the hostilities between the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

But then the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, and soon the Soviet Union and its satellite nations collapsed in response. George Bush, and later Bill Clinton, called for the nations of the world to band together under the umbrella of democracy in the New World Order.

If they are successful—and they are working hard at it—will their efforts lead to lasting peace? The odds are against them, as well as biblical prophecy.

More likely, the New World Or-

der presages more conflict and a miserable trip down the path to Armageddon.

The New World Order could provide a sugarcoated shell for the coming world dictator, the Beast, to hatch his sinister plans. Of the King of the North, Daniel writes, "Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery" (Daniel 11:32), and II Thessalonians 2:9-12 and Revelation 13:12-17 show that the False Prophet will deceive the world into allegiance to the Beast, probably under the guise of "Peace and safety!" (I Thessalonians 5:1-3).

But in the end, the Beast's true nature comes out: "He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above them all. But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses. . . . Thus he shall act against the strongest of fortresses . . . and divide the land for gain" (Daniel 11:37-39).

"And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. . . . And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation" (Revelation 13:5, 7).

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. 'Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.' And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon" (Revelation 16:13-16).

"But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. . . . Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober" (I Thessalonians 5:4, 6)!

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh

In Brief . . .

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Consider What You Say!

As we waken from many years of a relaxed spiritual condition, many find great joy in renewed efforts at personal Bible study. The scriptures seem to spring open with new understanding and application in ways we have never experienced. Wonderful truths, which appeared hidden or beyond our grasp in the past, can now be picked like ripening fruit on a flourishing tree.

Many are beginning to see that we indeed can fulfill the function of teachers as outlined in Hebrews 5:12. In producing articles or sermonettes, some are contributing to the spiritual welfare of the entire church. Others provide uplifting conversation both on the Sabbath and during the week that greatly increases the quality of Christian fellowship. In one manner or another, virtually everyone is helping to strengthen God's people through an increase in spiritual knowledge, understanding and wisdom.

But another side to writing articles, giving sermonettes and sharing ideas in conversation is mentioned in James 3:1: "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." Yes, personal Bible study is interesting, invigorating, even exciting, but when we *share* that study with others, we become teachers. And God holds teachers accountable for what they say!

Though being a teacher is a weighty responsibility, it is also a noble and rewarding calling. To ensure we succeed in it, here are five suggestions that will help:

1) When relating what you believe to be factual, make sure you can prove what you say with clear scriptures. God's truth is pure (Psalm 119:140). If it backs you up, you are on solid ground. One Church of God minister told his sermonette

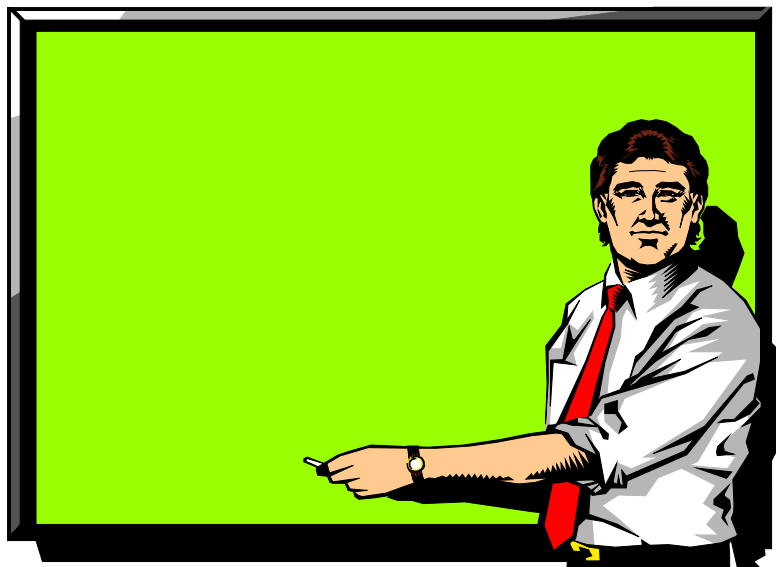
speakers, "Hide behind the Bible!"

2) Realize that one's personal opinions carry little weight. Even Jesus Christ said that His personal witness of Himself as a human was not to be believed (John 5:31). The only true witness is God and His Word.

3) Get feedback from others about what you are thinking by using the "iron sharpens iron" principle (Proverbs 27:17). Ask someone you consider wise and spiritually mature to critique your ideas. Sometimes, we can get so caught up in a particular area of study, that we can't see the proverbial forest for the trees. Remember, you can find wisdom and safety in a multitude of counsel (Proverbs 24:6).

4) If what you want to present to others is speculative, then clearly label it so and voice it cautiously. There is nothing wrong with speculation, as it can be very thought-provoking and may spur others to deeper study. But speculation presented as fact can be harmful to the spiritual welfare of others, especially those younger or weaker in the faith.

5) Be sure to follow the apostle Paul's advice in Ephesians 4:15: "But speaking the truth in love. . . ." We are to express the truth of God *in love*, for the ultimate good of others, not as a cudgel over their heads. Will what you say or write edify the church? Will it generate faith? Will it promote unity? Will it glorify God? Paul had to warn Timothy about



those who shared the kind of information that tends to cause disputes and dissension among the brethren (I Timothy 1:3-5).

Have you noticed that God does not reveal spiritual truth all at once? Some things have taken His people thousands of years to understand! Why? God's biggest concern is not revealing truth, but the successful completion of His purpose—bringing His children into His Family. He makes sure that truth is revealed at the proper time and so that it edifies and improves the spiritual welfare of His people.

Our Savior and Judge, Jesus Christ, gives a thought-provoking warning in Matthew 12:36: "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment." It is bad enough to have to give account for what we say in idle conversation, but think how much more rigorous the judgment will be upon those who purposely teach God's Word!

Now we can understand why Proverbs 18:21 tells us that death and life are in the power of the tongue! Let's make sure that our words are producing life!

—David A. Taylor

Stalked by Satan

The apostle Peter warns us, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Why does Peter compare Satan the Devil to a lion? Why not a snake or an alligator or some other ferocious animal?

Many writers of the Bible use analogies to describe people, attitudes, traits and situations that may have some effect on our spiritual lives. Peter’s description of Satan is no different. And since forewarned is forearmed, it makes sense that if we learn more about lions, we will be better able to defend ourselves against Satan’s strategies and tactics.

When Peter wrote this, wild lions still roamed parts of the Middle East. The people of that time were more familiar with lions and their habits than we are today in our steel and asphalt jungles. Now we see lions only in the zoo. The captive lion bears little resemblance to the beast to which Peter compares Satan. Captive lions lie around looking bored, stirring only to swat a fly or find some shade—somewhat unimpressive to say the least. These indolent, caged lions, seen during the day and with a full stomach, can give a false impression.

A wild lion may not seem much more impressive. However, that is because, like Satan, lions are deceptive. They do most of their work at night, when no one is watching. Under cover of the night, they become great hunters. Their tan coats, a natural camouflage, blend into the bush, so that even the male lion, which can weigh as much as 500 pounds and measure 10 feet from nose to tail, is nearly invisible.

Using this camouflage to their ad-

vantage, lions stalk their prey. Because their top speed is only about 35 miles per hour over a short distance, they do not run down their food very often. They creep slowly toward their victims behind the



cover of the tall grasses of the plains, and with a swift dash, pounce upon their prey.

Beyond their natural camouflage, they have excellent night vision and acute senses of smell and hearing to help them stalk under darkness. To help their odds, they hunt within a territory, roaming about with a company of lions, called a pride.

Lions are selective hunters, picking off stragglers, the old, the ailing. They will strike into the pack or herd if necessary, but they prefer everything in their favor.

Once it has its target, a lion’s body is well-suited for killing. Each toe has a strong retractable claw, up to three inches long. The lion will hurl itself onto its prey, inflicting deep gashes and wounds.

Its jaws can open up to twelve inches wide and are strong enough to crush a bull’s spine at a bite. A lion

has thirty teeth, none meant for chewing, only tearing and ripping. It will bite, claw and cuff the thrashing victim, often appearing to play with it.

Even with all these deadly weapons arrayed against him, the victim’s death does not come quickly. It may take ten minutes or more. The last thing the lion does is go for the throat.

Can you see why Peter compared Satan to a lion? The great deceiver, more often than not, works under cover of darkness. As a skilled and experienced hunter, he patiently stalks his prey, invisible to them (invisible is about as camouflaged as one can get!). His night vision is acute, his senses much sharper than ours. He sees us when we do not even know he’s there!

Even now—he’s stalking us.

Lifted up in their pride, he and his demons had the gall to hunt God’s throne, but they were soundly routed (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:16-17; Luke 10:18). Now, as our adversaries, they hunt God’s people, trying to pick off the weak, the ailing and those who have grown weary and dropped back from the herd. Once he attacks, he causes great pain—but he does not go immediately for the kill. He pins us down and wounds us first. Even while in his grasp, though, we can call out for help. “The LORD is near to all who call upon him, . . . he also hears their cry, and saves them” (Psalm 145:18-19, RSV).

Of course, it would be best never to allow ourselves to be caught! In the future, think of Satan as a lion, quietly and invisibly stalking you. He is always looking for a way to maneuver you into a position by yourself where he can leap out of nowhere to maul you. Hopefully—and as Peter probably intended—this spiritual imagery will help us stay alert.

—Michael R. Ford

How You Can Glorify God!

When King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched into Judah in 597 B.C. and subdued the nation, part of his booty included King Jehoiachin and the prophet Ezekiel, who were quickly hauled off to Babylon. For nearly ten years the prophet watched from afar his once proud nation sink into decay and destruction. Why did Judah, and Israel a century and a half earlier, fall?

A major purpose of Ezekiel's book is to remind Israel and Judah—and their descendants—of the causes of both their destruction and their coming national restoration. Central to that theme is the departure of the glory of God from the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 9-11) and the prediction of its ultimate return (Ezekiel 43).

God's glory departed from the Temple because of a famine. Strange? Not really. This famine was the lack of the fruit of righteousness, and it resulted in Sabbath-breaking, idolatry and violence (Ezekiel 20:1-32). Such a famine is prophesied for our own peoples (Amos 8:11).

How can a man glorify the great and awesome Creator God? We can really do nothing that impresses Him—nothing that He could not do Himself. What gets God's attention is obedience, living in the manner revealed through His Word (Ezekiel 33:10-20).

Israel failed to live righteously according to God's commands. As the years passed, the people of Israel steadily grew more corrupt and farther from God; they were not glorifying Him in their actions as an example to the Gentile nations around them. Since Israel's witness was unrighteous, God was not being glorified! Thus, He removed His glory from the Temple as a sign of His displeasure.

God expects us, as His people, the

Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), to reflect His glory in our attitudes and actions as an example of righteousness to others. The apostle Paul writes, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:20). "Glorify" in this context means to honor, magnify and praise, and we do these things in our body and spirit, synonymous with action and attitude.

Christ reveals an important aspect of glorifying God through the apostle John: "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:8). And we know that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). If our attitudes and actions reflect this spiritual fruit, we will be glorifying God in our lives.

The fruit of the Spirit and righteousness grow in peace and produce more peace. Their lack produces violence, as the history of ancient Israel attests and our own decaying society proves today.

The home, a place where virtue and truth are to be taught and nurtured, should be peaceful, not full of contention. If peace is absent, the fruit of righteousness cannot grow, just as any crop needs a certain kind

of climate in which to grow. After describing godly wisdom, a fruit of righteousness, James writes, "Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:18).

The glory of God is the revelation of the character and the presence of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ, one of whose titles is "the brightness of [the Father's] glory" (Hebrews 1:3). By producing the fruit of righteousness, Christ manifested God's glory (John 1:14). Through our own righteous conduct, we can reflect Christ's glory, similar to the way the moon reflects the sun's brightness (Philippians 1:11). In producing the fruit of righteousness in an atmosphere of peace, we let God's glory shine through us and make an acceptable witness of God before others (Matthew 5:14-16).

Violent and corrupt Israel did not represent and glorify God to the Gentile nations with the fruit of righteousness, so God removed His glory from the Temple in Jerusalem. But, when Israel turns back to God and produces the fruit of righteousness in peace, God's glory will again brilliantly shine (Ezekiel 43:1-11).

The apostle Paul sums it up by writing to God's church in Corinth—and to us today—"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31).

—Martin G. Collins



there the data that serve as the foundation of this **later** dogmatic formulation" [*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, "God (NT)," p. 1055].

"The new element is the historical Jesus, at once the representative of humanity and of God. As in philosophy, so now in theology, the easiest solution of the problem was the denial of one of its factors: and successively these efforts were made, until a solution was found in the doctrine of the Trinity, which satisfied both terms of the equation and became the fundamental creed of the church. Its moulds of thought are those of **Greek philosophy**, and into these were run the Jewish teachings. We have thus a **peculiar** combination—the religious doctrines of the Bible, as culminating in the person of Jesus, run through the forms of an **alien philosophy**" (*The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 6, p. 284).

"The New Testament teaching upon this subject is not given in the way of formal statement. The formal statement, however, is legitimately and necessarily **deduced** from the Scriptures of the New Testament, and these, as has been suggested, cast a light backward upon the intimations of the Old. . . . It is admitted by all who thoughtfully deal with this subject that the Scripture revelation here leads us into the presence of a deep mystery" (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 1118).

What is wrong with the Bible's own description of God? The problems arise when one tries to blend alien, human, philosophical thinking with the Bible's own clear statements about God. To this odd mix is added man's unwillingness to believe "the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Corinthians 11:3). Would a loving God inspire the Bible to be difficult for His people to understand?

The contents of the Bible is the revelation of God to the converted. Reveal means "to make known through divine inspiration; to make (something secret or hidden) pub-

licly or generally known; to make manifest, expose to view, divulge." Jesus says in Matthew 11:25, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes." What makes His statement especially interesting is that it is part of His response to a question asking who He was (verses 2-3).

His identity is plainly revealed in what He said about Himself. But the Jewish leadership rejected His teachings, while the humble, unlearned and simple accepted and believed it. Rather than being a denunciation of true scholarship, Jesus emphasizes the attitude of the "babes." Thus He denounces the leaders' intellectual pride which led them to reject His clear revelation of God, in contrast to the "babes" whose humility enabled them to accept it.

In Genesis 1:26 Moses writes that man is created in God's "image" and "likeness." Any reliable lexicon mentions that "image" and "likeness" reinforce each other in a manner common to Hebrew. It means we are like God in form and implies that, like Him, we have a spiritual capacity which animals do not have.

Genesis 2:24 shows that two human personalities can become one flesh. Why, then, can God not be one with two distinct personalities who work independently yet in complete harmony? Paul adds in I Corinthians 6:17, "But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him." If a human can be one with God and remain entirely distinct, why cannot another spirit being with a separate personality be one with Him?

Another approach to this is through the Bible's use of parables (Greek, *parabole*). Parable is closest in meaning to "similitude." Generally, but not always, parables are introduced with the words, "The kingdom of God is like. . . ." In Hebrews 9:9 and 11:19, *parabole* is

translated "figure," "figurative" or "symbolic," meaning a comparison is used to show parallels, so that from the human, temporal and material realm we may understand the eternal and spiritual reality.

Jesus consistently referred to God as "Father," Himself as "Son" and whoever does the will of God as brother, sister or mother (Mark 3:35). Paul adds in Romans 8:14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God," and in verses 16, 17 and 19 he switches between "children" and "sons."

John says, "We are children of God; and . . . we shall be like Him" (I John 3:2), implying we will one day be more like Him than we are today, though even now we are in His image and likeness. Many more scriptures show this family parallel, but Ephesians 3:14-15 plainly states the truth: "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole **family in heaven** and earth is named." Already a Family exists in heaven—not the angelic family, but the Family in which we are sons and daughters. We are the part of that heavenly Family but still on the earth.

Jesus and the apostles use so many family parallels that the lesson is overwhelming. Do families consist of one member? Of course not! Why would Jesus and the apostles even use such an analogy over and over if an honest parallel of kind between the human, physical family and a godly, spiritual one did not exist?

The fourth word of the Bible is the first-mentioned name of God, *elohim*, and it acts almost as God's signature, authenticating His authorship of the book. Appearing around 3000 times, of which 2300 refer to God, *elohim* is also used of idols, men, angels and judges. Though its root means "to swear," the concepts of might and authority are implied, and the biblical writers use it in the sense of "mighty ones" or "authorities."

In form *elohim* is plural, but its

use in the Bible indicates a singular body, group, class or family that contains more than one part. We can easily see that angels, judges and idols are distinct, powerful bodies, groups, classes or families of beings with more than one personality within them. Why should the usage of *elohim* be any different when applied to God?

Webster's Dictionary defines "class" as "a group of people of the same rank or status in a community; a comprehensive group of animals or plants." It defines "family" as "a group consisting of parents and their children; a harmonious group bound together by common interests."

"Family" need not be used strictly in the sense of blood relationship. It can also be correctly used to indicate a multi-member group, related by occupation, species, status, responsibility, kind, etc. It is in this sense that the Bible frequently uses *elohim*. Angels are a family of created spirit beings, one kind. Judges are a group of individuals with common authority and responsibility. As Paul says in I Corinthians 8:5, "There are many gods and many lords," false gods are a group—all are one category—because they share one common trait: They are all false.

Occasionally, *elohim* is used in a singular sense. In *All the Divine Names and Titles in the Bible*, Herbert Lockyer states, "Yet the word in this singular form is not full enough to set forth all that is intended. . . . It is a repository of truth concerning the Persons [plural] of the Godhead in the essential unity, and a mode of expressing the abundance and diversity of transcendent attributes combined in the Deity" (p. 6). Parkhurst in his *Hebrew Lexicon* writes, "*Elohim* is plurality in unity. Accordingly Jehovah is at the beginning of creation named *Elohim*, which implies that the divine Persons [plural] had sworn when they created."

If this was all we had, we would already have strong evidence of God being a Family of individuals, living and working in harmony on a common plan toward a common goal.

But there is much more! And, contrary to popular belief, it does not require a doctorate to understand—just normal intelligence.

John's gospel begins, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2). "With" means "used to indicate that two or more persons or things are together, near each other, in agreement, harmony etc.; in the company of; accompanied by."

The next verse says, "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." Paul adds in Colossians 1:16, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." These verses reveal the Word, who became Jesus Christ, as the agent of creation, performing the work necessary to carry it out. He is not only God but *with* another who is also God. "Through Him" implies that this other Being authorized the works of creation carried out by the Word. Does this not indicate two distinct personalities, both called God by inspiration, working in harmony to accomplish a work?

Psalm 45 is a Messianic prophecy: "You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, with Your glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You awesome things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; the peoples fall under You. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions" (verses 2-7). The word for "God" used once of the Messiah and

later for the Messiah's God, is *elohim*! Paul quotes this psalm in Hebrews 1:8-9 to prove that Jesus ("through whom also He made the worlds," verse 2) is worthy of the worship of angels. To worship anything less than God breaks the first commandment! This shows Jesus to be God before and after His incarnation.

Philippians 2:6-7 adds more to our understanding of this: "[Jesus Christ], being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men." Phillips renders it, "For he, who had **always been God by nature**, did not cling to his privileges as God's equal, but stripped Himself of every advantage by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born a man." Moffatt translates, "Though he was **divine by nature**, he did not set store upon equality with God, but emptied himself by taking the nature of a servant; born in human guise and appearing in human form." As in other scriptures, He was God, divine by nature, with—beside, accompanying—a different personality also called God!

This explains why Genesis 1:26 uses the plural pronouns "Us" and "Our" to refer to their antecedent *elohim*. Two divine personalities were working as one. They were equal in that both were God but not equal in authority, even as husband, wife and child are equal in their humanity but not equal in authority. Jesus said it Himself: "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).

In John 8:58 Jesus identifies Himself as the "I AM." Furthermore, He also says man has "neither heard His [the Father's] voice at any time, nor seen His form" (John 5:37), and only Jesus Christ who came from God has seen the Father (John 6:46). Yet Israel heard God speak the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1), and Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel saw the God of Israel (Exodus 24:9-10). There can be only one conclusion: They saw God, the One who be-

came Jesus of Nazareth, not the other personality of the Godhead, called later “the Father.”

In addition, the very hope of a Christian is in vain if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead (I Corinthians 15:12-19). But we know He did rise (verses 3-4). Who resurrected Him, then, if not a distinct and separate Being? The same reasoning holds true with His ascension. Where? To sit at the Father’s right hand (Hebrews 1:3)!

The Bible is full of similar examples which clearly show God consisting of two Beings cooperating in family harmony. In John 17:20-22, part of Jesus’ prayer before His crucifixion, He prays that we would all be one with the Father as He and

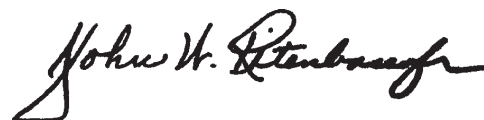
the Father are one. When He made that prayer, He and His Father were certainly distinct personalities, yet they were one, and we will be one as they were before and are now again after His crucifixion and resurrection. They are of one nature, one mind and one Family (Kingdom). They are *elohim* working in complete cooperation and harmony.

His prayer implies that the oneness, at least its fullness, will occur when we are changed and inherit His Kingdom. Will we be enveloped in God and lose our personal identity? Revelation 3:12 says we will be given a new name. We give names to things and personages to establish personal identity or to distinguish one from another! Revelation 21:24

shows kings of nations, as part of the Kingdom of God, clearly identifiable as individuals. John saw nations, meaning he saw national characteristics in individuals who have inherited the Kingdom of God and taking their place within the divine Family.

The overwhelming evidence is that God is one, a Family at work fulfilling its purpose of bringing multiple billions into itself. What a tremendous burden will be lifted from all creation when God, by grace and awesome creative power, molds the division and conflict of man’s realm into the oneness of God!

In Christian love,



Festival Update

Dear Brethren,

Greg Griswold and I have just returned from San Antonio and wish to give you a progress report.

The rooms are not as far along in remodeling as expected, but we have been assured that crews are being added to refurbish six or more rooms per day. Knowing how best intentions can go astray, we would very much appreciate your prayers that all of our rooms will be completed by Feast time.

Last year we had a few problems with the hotel requesting payment on the holy days, so this year I asked Seven Oaks what their policy was so we can avoid any conflict.

Seven Oaks has a simple rule. *If you pay by credit card, you may pay your bill at the end of your stay. If you are paying by cash, and do not wish to pay in advance, you must pay daily. If you wish to pay on a daily basis, then plan to pay for two days in advance when faced with a holy day or Sabbath to avoid having to do business on holy time.*

We checked at the local museum (ten minutes from Seven Oaks) as to what exhibits will be available while we’re in town. We were pleased to

find out that in addition to the normal exhibits, there will be a whale exhibit with full-sized mammals on display. This should be a wonderful treat for the whole family.

We have planned a WESTERN NIGHT for Tuesday, October 5, which will include an outdoor bar-



becue and square dancing. We have arranged for a wonderful caller that can take us from our left foot to our right and have us enjoy it. Don’t let square dancing scare you, as all of us are beginners. We are looking forward to a fine evening.

Also, fun-filled, romantic dinner cruises along San Antonio’s River Walk are available. Places are still available for October 3 and 4, from 6-8 pm and 8-10 pm. A three-course

meal provided by Boudro’s includes a Southwest Caesar’s salad; choice of blackened prime rib, grilled prime rib, pecan grilled fish fillet, stuffed boneless chicken breast; and nut brittle ice cream in a pool of fudge sauce. The cost is \$34.80 per person and advance reservations are required. If you wish to see the River Walk from this unique perspective, call Boudro’s at 201-224-8484 by September 20. They will require a phone number and credit card number to guarantee your reservation.

Aside from the above, we trust we have taken care of all of the physical needs to ensure we will have a wonderful Feast. See you in San Antonio in just a few short weeks!

Sincerely,



P.S. If for any reason, you have not made your reservations, *now is the time to do so!* If you need information about attending the Feast of Tabernacles with the Church of the Great God, please call or write the church office. Our address and phone numbers are found on page 2.