

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 4, No. 7

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

Sept/Oct 1998

Does Christ Need a MARKETING PLAN?

It is wonderful to hear examples of brethren preaching the Gospel to others in a variety of ways. Some still include regular radio/TV programs, publications, or tapes. But many ways of sharing Bible teaching involve direct personal efforts of people teaching others. One method in use is the public Bible study (such as the Trucker's Bible Studies covered in *Servants' News*). Other methods involve distributing food or other necessities to the poor, and teaching or providing literature to those who are interested. The simplest method is for one believer to teach another person about their understanding of the Eternal and His Word.

The New Testament tells us much about how the Gospel was preached during that time. The following list is not exhaustive, but it shows the majority of places where the Gospel was preached and the methods that were used. These scriptures paint a rather stunning picture of how and where the

gospel was preached. Please read them all:

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.... And when this sound occurred, **the multitude came together...** Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.... Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them (Acts 2:2,6,38,41).

Now when they [corrupt leaders] saw the boldness of **Peter and John**, and perceived that they **were uneducated and untrained men**, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing **the man who**

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How Should We Keep the Feast of Tabernacles In Our Day?

This year, our family went to Gatlinburg, Tennessee for the Feast of Tabernacles. Gatlinburg is only a few miles from Pigeon Forge. Between the two cities, almost everything imaginable is available to eat, drink, try, buy or experience. There are hundreds of restaurants and shops of all sizes and types. There are plays, musical performances, amusement parks, arcades, and go-cart tracks. For those who want to experience things, there is laser-tag, bungi-jumping, in-door sky-diving and human sling-shooting. For those more interested in nature, there are scenic mountains, hills, streams and parks which may be accessed by hiking, horseback, automobile or cable-car.

None of these things are inherently

evil. They are not sins. Due to the generosity of others, my family took part in some of these things and enjoyed them very much. But should these things be the focus of the Feast of Tabernacles? What does the Bible teach on this matter?

For years, "Church of God" groups taught their members to save 10% of their income and to spend it all having fun during the Holy Days, primarily the Feast of Tabernacles. This teaching was based largely on Deuteronomy 14:26:

And thou shalt bestow that money for **whatsoever thy soul lusteth after**, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for

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Next Issue:

Herbert Armstrong, how do we regard his teaching? Must we either believe it all or reject it all? Should we believe all except that which we can disprove from the Bible? Or, believe only what we can prove from the Bible?

Trucker's Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo., Part 6a



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

October 18, 1998: Today's study was both unique and sad. We had two visitors. One man came about thirty minutes before the normal starting time and our chatting beforehand led me to decide on changing the topic for the day to prophecy and the role of a prophet. His distress at the direction of this country and its leadership seemed to make it a natural. But such plans were not to be.

We were joined by an older, seasoned driver who listened to the opening comments as we began a study on the role of a prophet, then asked a seemingly unrelated question. "How would you tell someone that they have only six months to live?" We said we didn't know—tough question to deal with.

Then he said that the doctors had just told him just that—that he has a terminal illness. How does he tell his family? What should he do now?

The sense I got is that he believes in God, is a decent human being, but is basically "unchurched". I said a short silent prayer asking that I at least not say something stupid, and hopefully say something helpful. God answered this prayer. Scripture after scripture came to mind, which we discussed.

We talked about the resurrection and how God has a plan for each one of us, and that death is not the end and so forth. We talked about the 23rd Psalm, and how God will be beside him every step of the way. We turned to Thessalonians, and Paul's words about comforting one another with his teaching about the resurrection of the dead. We talked about how Jesus gave up immortality to taste death for every man, and He knows what we are going through.

And then we began a study about Biblical healing and God's power to heal—how he healed Hezekiah even though he was told he would die. Sometimes God heals as a sign. Sometimes God heals even if our faith isn't strong ("Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief"). And we are told that by His stripes we are healed.

The man said that the doctor called in the chaplain when he was told the nature of his condition, but didn't want to deal with it in such a manner at that point. I asked him if he was ready now to asked for God's healing, and he said yes. We prayed for God's healing as we closed the meeting. I also gave him my address and asked him to stay in touch.

We all have many things we pray about, but I would like to ask everyone who gets this message to ask God's healing for him.

Before closing, I must tell you that the above is an accurate report of our meeting accept for one point. He alluded several times to being out of money until he can get another load to deliver, which my skeptical nature noticed. When conducting Bible studies, we run into those who view religion as an easy way to get a handout if their story is sad enough. While I can't verify one way or the other what the deal is, he in any event needs prayer—either for his healing or his repentance. Considering all factors, I believe he was sincere.

—Lenny Cacchio, 705 NE Bryant Dr, Lees Summit, MO 64086 lenny_cacchio@hotmail.com

Dealing with the impending death of a loved one should be much like dealing with children who are leaving home, close friends who are moving far away or even a closely knit church group that is breaking up. In all of these cases, we are about to disrupt our interchange with people with whom we have shared much—or even depended upon for our continued living. We often do not know when we will see them again—whether in this life or a resurrection. We never know whether our death or the death of another living person will occur first. We may search for a way to stop a separation or we may ask the Eternal to stop it. However, He, in His wisdom, often lets it happen. It should be our goal to prepare ourselves and the others around us to function without these departing people. Those who are dead are resting from the evils of our governments, leaders, entertainment, etc. Those who remain alive must continue to learn, serve, and grow in whatever situations our Father allows to exist. —Norman Edwards

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

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

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

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

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Charlotte, Michigan 48813-0220

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Internet: <http://www.best.com/~oasis7/sn/>

Subscription and literature requests may be sent to the following addresses. Contributions received at these locations will be used for duplicating and mailing. Please make checks out to the name shown with the address:

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Most scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Circulation: 2400

Servants' News is published monthly except for combined January/February, March/April and September/October issues. Subscriptions are free to people who request the publication and are genuinely interested in it. *Servants' News* is published by Norman S. Edwards, 202 Pearl St, Charlotte, Michigan 48813. He reserves the right to refuse subscriptions for any reason. Periodical postage pending at Charlotte, Michigan. Postmaster: send address changes to *Servants' News*, PO Box 220, Charlotte, Michigan 48813-0220.



News from

Local Congregations



Ron Dart To Kansas City

Everyone is invited to Kansas City, the Sabbath of December 5, 1998 for a day of activities. Ron Dart will hold a Bible Study at 10:30 A.M. This study is designed for people without a "Church of God" background. Listeners to *Born to Win*, Ron Dart's radio program, are being invited. You may want to bring a friend. The study will be at the Adam's Mark Hotel in eastern Kansas City, I-70 and Blue Ridge Cutoff.

Sabbath services are at 2:30 P.M., followed by a dinner and social with activities for young and old. These events will be at the RLDS church, 31st St. and South Chrysler, Independence, Missouri. You are welcome to come for any or all of the above. For more information, contact Rick Frazee, 816-461-3252 or pjcrim@aol.com.

In the Footsteps of the Messiah Bible Study Seminar

What was the religion God gave His chosen people? Did the Messiah change that religion when He came? We will spend four days of intense Bible study answering these and other important questions.

When: December 24-27, 1998.

Where: Western Hills Lodge, Sequoyah State Park, Wagoner, Oklahoma.

Speakers Include: Norman Edwards, *Servants' News*; Joseph Good, *Hatikva Ministries*; Dell Griffin, *Torah Voice Ministries*; John Merritt, *Friends of the Sabbath*; Jim Rector, *Conerstone Publications*; Dean Wheelock, *Hebrew Roots*.

Other Highlights Include: Praise and worship music, fellowship, family activities, food, youth activities, question and answer sessions, Hebrew dancing, a very special Sabbath!

For reservations call 800-654-8240. Make reservations by December 1 for room discounts. To obtain discount
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rate, refer to *In the Footsteps of the Messiah*. For information on R.V. or camp sites, call 918-772-2046.

For more information, contact:

Mitchell Smith, 405 N. Main St, Lindale, Texas 75771; 903-882-7446; e-mail: Mitchandnita@juno.com.

Tim Kelley, Rt 2 Box 364-5, Hawkins, Texas 75765; 903-769-2750; e-mail: N55154@aol.com.

Milwaukee Singles Event

Come enjoy fun, fellowship, and Bible study with other Sabbatarian singles, Dec 24-27. Activities include: Bible studies, hymn sing-along, Sabbath service, dance, winter wonderland nature hike, volleyball, bowling, snow fun, line dancing, Myers-Briggs personality type indicator test, mystery poets contest, baby picture guessing gallery, etc. Fifty dollars will cover all activities and two home-made meals daily. Assistance will be provided for obtaining lodging, sharing lodging with another person, or staying in the homes of local brethren. For more information, contact Cathy Folker, 247 N. Main St #12, Dousman, WI 53118; 414-965-4108; cfolker@globaldialog.com or Dona R. Schaller; 414-673-2076; pearl@nconnect.net.

Ron Dart Spoke in Charleston

Ronald Dart, CEM president and presenter of the "Born to Win" program, spoke before a crowd of 80+ people in Charleston, West Virginia on Saturday, November 7, 1998. The hour and a half morning presentation conducted by Mr. Dart was a group discussion with Q&A's on current events. Attendees were from North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

A chili and sandwich luncheon was provided for those who wished to stay at the hall and fellowship during the noon time period. The afternoon Sabbath services began at 2:30 and a sermon titled "The End of Apathy" was

delivered by Ronald Dart.

Special music was performed by three guests to the Charleston congregation. Sheree Kessler sang "My Last Day" and was accompanied by Jim Carden on the guitar. Sharon Hill sang "Peace Speaker". Following the sermon services were concluded with a special music medley of two songs, "No other Name" and "All Hail the Power", performed on the keyboard by Rob Evens.

The day's events were conducted with the help of other "independent" area congregations and fellowships and individuals. Without this cooperation, the day would not have been as rich and fulfilling as it was. The success of this day may better show the word "independent" to really translate, "inter-dependent".

Anyone liking a free audio copy of either the morning Q&A session, the afternoon services containing all the special music and sermon, or both, write to: Church of God - Southern West Virginia, P.O. Box 4472, Charleston, WV 25304 or e-mail your request to: COGSOWV@AOL.COM

—George Hampton

New Sabbatarian Singles Editor

Michelle Ward is taking over the Sabbatarian Singles List from Carol Smith, who won't be single much longer. Anyone who would like to add their name to this list, and receive the names of other singles at no charge can contact her at:

—Michelle Ward

66 Demarest Ave, River Vale, NJ 07675
e-mail: Kheryn@aol.com

(Another Sabbatarian Singles list with more information is available for a small fee: *Sabbath Singles Connection*, 3229 Larkin Road, Biggs, California 95917; e-mail: mikekawa@inreach.com.)

Finding Those of Similar Belief

Servants' News often receives letters from people looking for other

groups of similar belief (sacred names, calendars, etc). There are hundreds of groups with whom we are familiar, but there are also hundreds more with whom we are not familiar. If you are want to look for other groups, the Internet is probably the best place to do it. If you do not have access to it, you can probably find a friend or a library that does. An excellent Internet site to begin with is the "assorted flavors" site maintained by Mary Lois Bierman:

<http://www.flash.net/~ssef/assorted/>

This site provides access to hundreds of Sabbatarian groups and other biblically-oriented Internet sites. Once you type in the above line, all you need to do is look for what you are interested in, move the computer "mouse" and click the button!

SDAs Publish COG Author

The Seventh Day Adventists' major magazine for evangelising, "Signs of the Times", published an article by Craig White in the Australian November 1998 edition (vol 113 no 11). This may be a first for a Church of God member to have an article published in the magazine.

I was surprised and happy to see it published under the title *More than a Day. An interview with the founder of [Australian] Friends of the Sabbath.* They even paid for it, a further surprise!

The original article was about 4 pages, but it was compressed into 2 pages and laid out in a question and answer format (a couple of minor errors crept in, but no big deal). The SDAs seem to have a continuing interest in the Churches of God.

—Craig White

Meet Internet Sabbath Keepers

A new Internet community called "Sabbath Keepers" has been started using the resources of *Delphi* (a leading worldwide web service provider that specializes in helping people create their own discussion groups, chat rooms, and personal homepages. To join the discussion, simply go to:

<http://forums.delphi.com/m/main.asp?sgdir=mayseeus&isp=if&pic=in-MAY-SEEUS1228>

If a password is required, enter the word *sabbath*. If you've never used

Delphi before you'll need to go through a quick registration so you can participate in the discussion. It only takes a minute and it's free!

I hope to see you on-line soon,

—Manny Macias
mayseeus@shasta.com

BSA Begins Scholarship Program

"Sabbath-keeping youth need help and encouragement," says Richard Nickels, President of The Bible Sabbath Association. "One way to do this is to encourage academic achievement. That is why the BSA is instituting what we hope to be an annual scholarship program exclusively for Sabbath-keeping young people. We will start the program small, and with the Almighty's help, see where it leads. We hope many adults will become financial supporters of this excellent program."

Here's how the BSA Scholarship program works.

Who is eligible: Sabbath-keeping students 25 years of age or younger as of April 1, 1999, who are planning to pursue post-secondary education at an accredited college, university, or trade school anywhere in the world. International students are encouraged to apply. Children or close relatives of the Directors and Officers of The Bible Sabbath Association are not eligible.

How to apply: Request an application from: The Bible Sabbath Association, 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718, telephone: (307) 686-5191, or E-mail your request to giveshare@vcn.com. Submit completed forms and fee, if any, no later than February 15, 1999. Winners will be announced on or before April 1, 1999.

Application Fee: There is no application fee for subscribers to The Sabbath Sentinel, the 24-page BSA magazine published six times a year (\$15). All others must submit a \$10 application fee. At a minimum, one \$750 and one \$250 scholarship will be awarded. More will be awarded depending upon donations to the fund. 100% of donations made to the fund will be used for scholarship money—all mailing and miscellaneous expenses will be borne by the BSA.

Part of the application process is a brief essay. Entries may **not** be submitted via E-mail, but must be completed

by the applicant in his or her own handwriting. The winning essay will be published in *The Sabbath Sentinel*.

Scholarships will be paid directly to an accredited college, university, or trade school. A committee, led by Dr. Donald Ward of Texas, will be the judges. Tax-deductible donations for the BSA scholarship program are welcome.

—Richard Nickels Family
Giving & Sharing, Bible Sabbath Assn
3316 Alberta Dr., Gillette, WY 82718
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U.K. Church of God (Hulme)

17-Oct-98 Announcement Excerpt

1998 FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Most of the members and ministers have now returned home from this year's Feast. Reports will be prepared imminently for the *Church of God News* and the indications are that a wonderful Feast has been experienced and enjoyed by God's people. We have not had reports of any disruptive elements or attitudes which display a spirit of malcontent or hostility to the endeavours of the Church. On the contrary, it is now abundantly evident that God was, and undoubtedly still is, separating a people unto Himself whose sole purpose is to worship and obey Him and to gladly do His Work—a people who reject antinomianism and antigovernment and a people who work together in peace and harmony to announce the Gospel and for a building up of the Godly community. Those who hate their brother and speak evil of him are antinomian (against the Law of God—James 4:11) and they who hate the ordained servants of God are antigovernment (against the biblical method God set in the Church for pastoral care—Ephesians 4:10-13—and therefore against God).

Contrast the fine attitudes displayed at the Feast, if you will, with attitudes seen and experienced in the recent past by some who have been belligerent, bad-mannered, rude, offensive, confrontational, "in-your-face"—the kind of attitude repudiated by Jude (verses 10-12) where the fruitfulness of such people is withered and dead—"... spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear..." The inference in Jude is that an unruly spirit appended itself to their lives where

they cannot, seemingly, live peaceably with God's people. In our modern setting, one hopes and prays that such people find some kind of peace in their confusion, if that is at all possible.

NSE: Comment: *This is typical of the writing of new church organizations. It speaks of great peace and love among its members, but refers to those outside their group as anti-God and evil (read the book of Jude). Those who reject David Hulme are labeled "against the biblical method God set in the Church for pastoral care". How did David Hulme become a church leader? He was "ordained" by men just like hundreds of others in the now-antinomian WCG and then elected president by men of the UCG. These are the very men he is now writing against. Ephesians 4:11 clearly says that "He [Christ] Himself" places leaders in the church. The Bible says nothing about a succession of human ordinations of church leaders (for a Biblical explanation, ask for How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?). What works, fruits or miracles does David Hulme have which should convince us that Christ has placed him over all believers?*

Other church organizations also have this difficulty. This writer viewed the Last Great Day message by Rod Meredith of the Global Church of God. Although it used milder terms, it also gave a lesser spiritual status to those in other organizations and especially to those who were not part of any church organization.

We must also admit that some brethren who are not in organizations speak derogatorily of those who are. The clear reality is that Paul commanded us not to form factions, but that each of us would be rewarded according to the work we do (1Cor 1:10-13; 3:1-17). Those with the Holy Spirit are our brethren no matter what group they or we are in. But Paul clearly taught against those who practice and teach sectarianism. —NSE

Change in GCG Government

Global Church of God members in the Cleveland, Ohio, area received a letter from their San Diego headquarters assuring them that David Pack, the minister in their area, was still in good standing as a Global Church of God minister. The letter was signed by Raymond McNair, Edwin Pope and Larry Salyer, and it assured the mem-

bers that a 75% vote of the Board of Directors was needed to remove a minister, and that the signers of the letter made up 50% of the board. The letter made no mention of Rod Meredith or his opinion of the matter.

This is a vast change in the operation of the GCG since the time when this writer was Secretary of the GCG Board of Directors (1993-1994). At that time, major decisions were made by Rod Meredith—usually with the input of others, but either there was no voting or it was done as a unanimous formality. If one really believes in top-down government, then one should believe that Christ will correct the top man and there should be no voting. But our WCG experience (and the Bible) show that the Eternal does not always correct "top leaders".

At this point, it is not clear which of these groups within Global are for or against the talks with UCG (see page 6). People in these organizations will probably continue to be frustrated by various political maneuverings until they realize that the Bible does not teach us to form church organizations, hierarchies, or a succession of ordained ministers. For a thorough explanation, write for our free article, *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?*

—Norman Edwards

WCG Sale Prices are Secret

The Worldwide Church of God is progressing with the Ambassador University, Big Sandy Campus sale to a Catholic School. The price of this sale, as well as the price for the sale of the Pasadena "Office Facilities Building" have been kept secret. *Servants' News* has heard from WCG members wanting to know the sale prices. The WCG's Worldwide News contained articles on the sale, but failed to mention the price. The WCG has pledged itself to greater openness in its financial dealings—this would be a good place to start. If they are managing "God's property" in a Godly way, they should not need to keep it a secret. If anyone has evidence of these sale prices, we would be glad to print it.

GTA Suit Settled Out of Court

Attorneys for Garner Ted Armstrong and Suerae Robertson conducted a mediation conference on June 12, 1998, in the

offices of attorney James W. Knowles in Tyler, Texas. The parties agreed to settle for an undisclosed amount. The sexual assault suit was officially dismissed from District Court on July 14, 1998.

Suerae Robertson filed the suit originally against Garner Ted Armstrong and the Church of God, International. Robertson worked as a professional masseuse in Tyler and had a security camera installed after alleged sexual advances by Armstrong on his first visit. On his second visit, the video camera recorded over 40 separate sexual advances on the part of Armstrong which she rebuffed. I contacted Armstrong about this tape, and received a response stating that the tape was in the possession of the FBI which was investigating people for entrapment and extortion. None of this proved to be true.

Later, copies of this video tape were circulated among CGI leaders causing large groups to disassociate themselves from Armstrong. Ron Dart left to form Christian Educational Ministries; Lawrence Gregory, Ian Hufton and many other ministers left to form The Churches of God (now renamed to Church of God Outreach Ministries); and finally, the remaining CGI leaders removed Armstrong from power. Armstrong began his own organizations: Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association and the Intercontinental Church of God.

Servants' News has received calls and letters asking about the amount of the settlement, and expressing concern that tithes and offerings will be used to pay for "Armstrong's sins". We would be glad to print the amount of the settlement if it is made available to us from a reliable source.

The New Testament teaches that it is the duty of believers to be sure that what they are giving is used properly. The churches in Corinth chose one of their own people to go with Titus to administer the monetary gift that they were giving (2Cor 8:16-23). When brethren contribute to any religious group, they should know what their contributions are being used for.

Whether or not Garner Ted Armstrong has repented is not an issue for us to judge—Christ will judge that (John 5:22). However, it is important for believers to use the scriptures to determine the qualifications of church leaders (1Tim 3; Titus 1). —NSE ☐

Trucker's Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo., Part 6b

October 25, 1998: Today's study is difficult to describe. Arlo Geisman was not there, so I was the only one. Two truckers came. The first gentleman to arrive related how he was recently at a funeral for a relative, and the preacher at an ensuing church service began a five part series on the five steps of the grieving process, and he wanted to know if we could talk about it. Before we could get started, the second trucker arrived, who said not to think in terms of someone dying, but in terms of having graduated.

Now how does one deal with that approach to death and dying? As it turned out, that was not the real question.

I hesitate to share a synopsis of the entire conversation, as the second gentleman claimed he has had some rather strange experiences. He was of a Pentecostal religious background and claimed he had been pronounced dead, but then floated in the air and had to be restrained (while dead), and was then resurrected four days later. At one time he said he remembered nothing while being "dead", but then later said he was in a cold, dark place and heard the sound of gnashing of teeth.

The man talked incessantly, with himself as the constant center of attention. He claimed he knows in advance when people are going to die, and this seems to be a fixation of his. His experience had a surreal quality to it that was either totally fabricated or demonic.

Interesting that he was able to quote scripture, talk about Jesus, and salvation by grace, and relate supposed experiences that smack of supernatural intervention—experiences that don't sound like the God I know.

We were able to discuss the first and second resurrections directly from Revelation 20, relating it to the "resurrection to life" and "resurrection to judgement" that we read about in John 5. In other words, God has a plan of salvation for everyone. Also related Revelation 20 to Revelation 5, where we are told that the saints will rule on the earth.

Both men took the "Second Chance" study (about the first and second resurrections) that were provided by CEM as well as Bibles and tapes.

One never knows who will walk through the door on any Sunday morning. Today's was more negative as none of the others have been. As with any other aspect in life, one must be spiritually prepared at all times. My hope is that truck driver with the spiritual experiences will return some time. If in fact he is relating events that are true, I want to give him a direct warning about the source of such things.

I felt no fear of the man, but went home frustrated beyond belief. If he returns, I'll open with a prayer asking God to restrain any forces of Satan that may be present.

—Lenny Cacchio

lenny_cacchio@hotmail.com
705 NE Bryant Dr, Lees Summit, MO 64086

Comments by Norman Edwards:

It is good that Lenny Cacchio shared the details of this study with our readership. There are numerous instances in the New Testament where demon-influenced or demon-possessed individuals harassed or attacked those who were preaching the Gospel. Christ himself dealt with numerous demons.

Some of these demons terrorized other people, some caused the person they possessed to be sick or to hurt themselves. Others simply harassed the apostles and even pretended to talk religion:

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour (Acts 16:16-18).

This woman was clearly possessed of a demon which the apostles had to cast out in order to have peace (usually, demons were not cast out unless the possessed person asked to have it done). However, the scriptures make it clear that people can be influenced by demons



without necessarily being possessed:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (1Tim 4:1).

The people mentioned above were once a part of "the faith"—they departed from it. Simon the sorcerer fooled people with his "spiritual experiences":

But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God" (Acts 8:9-10).

The Bible does not say Simon was possessed of a demon, but he was certainly full of evil influence.

Why is your study apparently experiencing this difficulty with demonic spirits when many of the big organizations seem never to be troubled by them? From the many people that write or talk to us at *Servants' News*, it seems that your experience is typical. Ministries that are mostly academic or corporate-church oriented seem to have little trouble from these influences. Either because Satan does not want to challenge people with little spiritual commitment or because our Father in His mercy extends protection to spiritually weaker ones. But many ministries that get involved with really teaching people and helping them to change their lives do go through a time where they are harassed by demonic forces.

The solution is exactly as you suggested: pray that the Eternal will restrain these evil forces, and to rebuke them in the name of Jesus Christ if they cause trouble in any way. I hope that others will be able to learn from your experience and be ready in case they have similar problems in their studies. I hope this is not scary to anyone. It is a matter of, do we want to be real soldiers of Christ, or just "armchair quarterbacks"? 



Religious Front

Nineteen of 41 **nations in Europe are violating the religious rights of minority groups**, according to the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (www.ihf-hr.org). Violations may involve granting special protections to traditional or majority religions, particularly in countries where most of the populace is Orthodox or Muslim. Furthermore, some countries create stiff registration requirements to limit religious practice.

On November 13, the Far East Broadcasting Company will launch the **first full-time Protestant radio station in the Muslim nation of Indonesia**. The station will be programmed locally in the nation's capital, reaching more than 8.6 million people with 12 hours daily of religious music, news, and local programs.

With support from 1,000 Kenyan churches, *Gospel to the Unreached Millions* founder K. A. Paul held three nights of **evangelistic meetings at Nairobi's Uhur Park**. Paul, born in India, led the final night's crowd of 500,000 on a prayer march to the site of the U.S. Embassy bombing. An estimated half of the 800,000 individuals in attendance made a "Christian" commitment.

A worldwide coalition of religious leaders is joining a campaign for the **cancellation of the international debts of developing nations**. "Debt reduction can bring good to the populations of rich as well as poor countries," says Bill Peters, vice president of Jubilee 2000, which is calling on the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other international creditors to set aside the foreign debt of developing countries. The problem is especially acute in Africa, where about 20 countries owe more than \$220 billion to foreign creditors. Zambia alone owes \$7.1 billion and spends more on debt service than on education and health services for its people, 70 percent of whom live in poverty. Even though the crux of the matter is

Religious and World News

A summary of various newswire sources by Angel R. Oyola

usually in corrupt governments, Zambian evangelicals recently issued a joint statement calling for debt cancellation, saying the country's total debt is unpayable and hurts mostly the poor. Jubilee 2000 openly connects its goal of debt remission with scriptural mandates for the celebration of jubilee as a universal time to clear unpayable debts. *[This sounds like an effort to follow Biblical law, but there are so many corrupt and unbiblical aspects to international lending (the poor rarely ever get the money) that this gesture would probably encourage future corruption more than it would solve current problems.* —NSE]

Henry J. Lyons, beleaguered president of the National Baptist Convention USA, was forgiven by his board during a September annual session in which he confessed he had an "inappropriate" relationship with a female employee. But the unanimous decision by board members to forgive Lyons did not put an end to his problems. He faces trial in federal and Floridian courts on charges he used his position to steal millions of dollars from big corporations. A decline in donations has brought about a financial crisis within the denomination, which claims 8 million members. Critics contend the convention has inflated statistics and really has fewer than 1 million members. In his annual address, Lyons, a doctor in Theology, said he has made "serious miscalculations in judgment" in his personal and professional lives. "From the bottom of my soul, I am truly sorry. I want you to forgive me. I ask for your mercy," he said. The convention proved merciful.

After forgiving Lyons, it passed a resolution forgiving President Clinton for his affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. "We stand firmly behind our President," Lyons said. "We'd like to see the majority Republican Congress get off his back. We'd like to see Mr. Starr get off his back."

But the problems of the 56-year-old Lyons may not be over yet. Troubles began in July 1997 when his wife of 26 years, Deborah, set a fire that damaged a waterfront house in Florida, near Saint Petersburg. Lyons owns the home with Bernice V. Edwards, a former convention

public-relations director once convicted of embezzling \$60,000 from a school for at-risk students. Deborah Lyons told police she started the fire in a fit of anger after learning Lyons and Edwards own the house together. According to many within his denomination, Mr. Lyons, at this point, has a high mountain to climb. "If Dr. Lyons had any love left for himself and the National Baptist Convention, he would step down," Charles Kenyatta of New York City said. "To drag millions of people through all this mud is a shame. In the 118 years of our existence, we've never had a president this dumb." *[Forgiveness is not the issue for Lyons or Clinton. The Bible teaches that those who are not living by its principles should not be leaders, no matter what other qualifications they may have.]*

A group of Christian house church leaders, who function without government registration, has **issued a public appeal to China's leaders, calling for the release of imprisoned Christians**. The handwritten appeal was released to two journalists in Zhengzhou, a city in China's central Henan Province. According to Religion News Service, the document calls for the unconditional release of house church Christians in labor camps, for dialogue between government and church leaders in hopes of recognition for house churches, and for a clear-cut definition of religious cults. "We have been persecuted so long, we just have to fight the last fight," says Zhang Rongliang, a Christian farmer who is spokesperson for the group. "We have been silent too long." *[Some of these "house-churches" in China are Sabbath-keeping. Knowing the total number of believers and how many believe which doctrines is impossible because the groups must hide from the state, so almost nobody attempts to keep any written records which would probably be seized.* —NSE]

One year after **Russia enacted a controversial law restricting religious freedom**, Protestants and Roman Catholics say the measure has had a chilling effect on religious activity nationwide. The law has initiated a season of religious harassment and discrimination, while official favors are visited on Russia's dominant

Orthodox church and other "traditional" religions. Even though the new religion law is considered to be unconstitutional in at least 16 instances, critics say the law violates international human-rights standards and agreements signed by the Russian Federation. Government officials recently accused a pastor of using hypnosis to influence people who attended church, saying the pastor's faith was "non-traditional" and only a Russian under hypnotic influence would attend a church that is not Orthodox or Muslim. Tithing was also viewed as a problem. The prosecutors concluded a "normal" person would not sacrifice 10 percent of his income to support a church. *[Western democracies should not be shocked if anti-religious laws are passed in their countries. The laws may be passed right after some kind of mass-murder associated with a religious cult. The laws may claim to be a protection from dangerous cults, but they could be used to suppress a wide variety of small religious groups. Would the large religions stand up to defend religious freedom, or would they see this as a chance to eliminate their competition? —NSE]*

Seeking to place biblical perspectives onto the opinion pages of America's secular newspapers, the Lansing, Michigan, based Amy foundation is launching one of the first newspaper syndicates available on the Internet. Termed "Real Answers," the columns will seek to provide spiritual insight on current issues and problems. "Our nation is in a deepening spiritual and moral crisis," says Foundation president Jim Russell. "The Amy Internet columns will provide clearly defined spiritual and moral direction." Starting this month, two new columns are being provided weekly at the Amy Foundation Web site (www.amyfound.org). "These value principles have proven to be historically effective in restoring a character of faith, obedience, and love," Russell says.

Hopes are rising for papal visit to the Holy Land. The Wye Plantation peace accord, signed by Israel and Palestine on October 23, has raised hopes for a papal pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the year 2000, the Vatican's chief foreign-affairs official told reporters today. In an off-the-cuff exchange with reporters, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran

said that the new agreement opens the way to new possibilities for peace. While Pope John Paul has frequently voiced his desire to visit the Holy Land, the archbishop continued, "everything depends on the peace process and the application of the Wye Plantation accord." He observed that the agreement itself is a positive sign of the "good will of the leaders of the people in the Holy Land."

Questioned about his widely publicized statement that the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem is "illegal", Archbishop Tauran responded, "That has always been our position." The archbishop made that statement at a symposium on the future of the Holy City, organized by Jerusalem's Patriarch Michel Sabbah. Since the purpose of that symposium was to clarify the situation in Jerusalem for the benefit of "the bishops of the world's great nations—especially in the West," the Pope and the Secretary of State agreed that it would be a good time to set forth the official position of the Holy See, he said. "We are repeating what is affirmed in the United Nations resolutions," he added; "We are not alone in taking this position."

—Catholic World News

During a visit to Jerusalem, Tauran gave a speech in which he said that Jews, Moslems and Christians must all have a part in the final status of the governing of Jerusalem: "The meaning and value of Jerusalem are so great, are so unique, that they go beyond the interests of one state or beyond bilateral agreements between one and another states," he said.

"It is essential that the parties to the negotiations take fair and appropriate account of the sacred and universal character of the city. This requires that any possible solution should have the support of the three monotheistic religions, both at the local level and at the international level," said Tauran.

Many fundamentalist Christian groups teach that the Catholic Church is the "great whore" and that the pope will be "the antichrist". Few believe that the current pope, John Paul II, is the "antichrist", but they wonder if his successor will be a much more evil man. As a matter of fact, John Paul II himself wonders if his successor will be an evil man. More than once he has mentioned the old Catholic prophecy that there

would be 265 popes, the last of which would be evil. John Paul is number 264. Once a pope dies, he no longer has any say in who will replace him. His successor is picked by cardinals in a very private political process.

The November 11th *Wall Street Journal* had an article on Cardinal Francis Arinze, a native of Nigeria, naming him as likely successor to Pope John Paul II. It contained a quotation from Thomas Reese, author of "Inside the Vatican" who says of Arinze: "He's up there in the top five. He's got a personality that will capture the imagination of the world." *[Remember this: "And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries" (Dan 11:21). —NSE]*

World News

During the middle of July, **Yassir Arafat visited China for three days** and signed some kind of agreement with the Chinese—most likely for military and economic aid. China has often stated its support for the Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization and also maintains ties with Iran, Iraq, and Syria. *[For years, most people have recognized China as the only country big enough to field an army of 200,000,000 (Rev 9:16), but have wondered what interest China would have in the Middle East. The above items shows that China already does have an interest in the Middle East! —NSE]*

Over a million people have died in North Korea during three years of floods and drought, according to a U.S. congressional delegation that visited the country in August, albeit international aid is beginning to save lives. The group reports between 300,000 and 800,000 of North Korea's 23 million people have died each year since 1995, claiming more than twice as many lives as the Ethiopian famine of the mid-1980s. "They're going through an acute food shortage right now," says Mark Kirk, one of four congressional aides who visited the Communist nation. The group witnessed severe malnutrition and the use of "alternative" foods such as grass, roots, and bark, but reported that government and military leaders appeared well fed. Organizations such as CARE, Catholic

GCG & UCG Leaders Meet

The message was sent to all UCG elders on November 17, 1998 (emphasis added by SN):

Dear Fellow Elders,

On October 29, 1998, a meeting took place in East Texas with old friends from Global and United. We met for lunch and discussed old times as well as the issues which have been raised about the two organizations since their inception.

It would be difficult to summarize several hours of discussion, but our conclusion was that **a lot of the brethren want to know what the differences are between the two groups.** Our meeting could not answer this question completely, but we both agreed that we needed facts instead of generalizations and perceptions. Therefore we agreed to recommend to the two Councils (UCG and GCG) that they consider reviewing each other's doctrines and if necessary challenging them, in an effort to answer the question to everybody's satisfaction. A proposal to consider such was presented to both Councils by the six participants. Nothing further has been planned.

Nothing more can be said at the present time, but it seemed important to let everyone know that such an informal meeting did take place. In the day of rumors, one can only guess what may be said. It is also fair to say that because of the many overlapping relationships among members of the two organizations, **many old friends have continued to fellowship. For this we are very pleased.** The untimely death of Colin Adair this past Sunday has made the time we spent together even more meaningful. All those in United are deeply saddened over the death of Mr. Adair and we offer our deepest sympathy to his wife, Margaret, his family, and loved ones.

The six participants in the meeting were: Carl McNair, Colin Adair and Larry Salyer from Global; Doug Horchak, Roy Holladay and Jim Franks from United.

—Jim Franks

Norman Edwards comments:

This meeting, and the public acknowledgment of it, is a good thing. These leaders are acknowledging:

1. That each group contains true believers and that the brethren are right in their desire to seek closer ties with other groups.

2. That each group is a part of the work that God is doing and therefore tithes and offerings sent to that group are accepted by God.

3. That the Eternal can work through more than one human leader and more than one human organization at the same time.

If the above were not true, why would these leaders have bothered to meet in the first place? We hope that these organizations will continue to review the other's doctrines and practices. We hope that they realize that each group has almost as much variation in internal practice as there is variation between the groups. (For example: Some ministers teach British Israelism extensively, others do not teach it at all. Some ministers remove all duties from members who visit other groups, some encourage visiting.)

Unity will not come because the two groups agree on nearly all doctrines and all practices—they cannot agree on that within their own group. Unity will only come by recognizing that the Eternal plans His work, not organizations of men. Unity could begin now if organizations would agree to:

1. Not discipline members or elders for attending other groups.

2. Encourage local groups to participate in combined activities

3. Allow local groups to combine services with other groups.

Leaders may feel like they are losing control, but is not Christ in control? Their current practices are actually **dividing** people (see letters, page 18). ☞

reforms are needed for longer-term sustainability. *[One cannot help but remember that about the time the famine began, North Korea was boasting about its military might and potential nuclear weapons. If the Eternal was not ready for such evil to come upon us, He has ways of stopping it.*

—NSE] ☞

Your Local Group Can Visit With Ours Via Teleconference

During the Feast of Tabernacles this year, we tested and proved a method for conducting interactive Bible studies from a remote location. Over 30 people in a Rapid City hotel conference room were able to conduct an interactive Bible study with Norman Edwards in Gatlinburg by using special telephone equipment at each end. People at each end could hear each other—even while they were talking. Also, tapes of Gatlinburg sermons were transmitted via telephone to the Rapid City group—they began hearing a sermon less than an hour after it finished in Gatlinburg.

We would like to offer this service to home fellowships in North America. We are not offering it as a regular way to conduct Sabbath services or Bible studies, but as a one-time event to help start or encourage interactive services. Ultimately, each believer should be able to assemble with other available believers and be able to have a service dedicated to the Eternal—using whatever spiritual gifts are available. “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, **that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light**” (1Pet 2:9) Hopefully, every group has someone who can read the Bible and speak encouraging words to others. There may or may not be people who can lead in singing, play an instrument, facilitate an interactive study, exhort a group, teach a group, heal the sick, prophesy, etc. Not every gift is necessary for a service. You can start with what you have, and ask Christ to take care of what is lacking.

If your group is interested in sharing an interactive study with Mid-Michigan Sabbath Fellowship, please call 517-543-5544 to schedule a time. All you need is a group and a room with a power outlet and a place to plug in a telephone. The only costs involved are the shipping of the special telephone and the cost of the call—probably less than \$25. —NSE

“World News” from page 8

Relief services, and many others have contributed a significant amount of assistance. Since 1995, World Vision alone has sent nearly \$7.5 million in food, medicines, and clothing. Despite recent flooding, the fall harvest should feed the country through April, but Kirk says economic

Feast Reports

These 1998 Feast reports come from a variety of authors and often reflect just one person's opinion of a particular Feast. The person writing may not necessarily represent the views of those organizing the site. We edit and print all Feast reports that are sent to us. If a site is not included here, it is because we did not receive a report. We will accept additional reports and print them in the next issue.

Gatlinburg, Tennessee

The Feast in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, was sponsored by *United Christian Ministries*, and held in Mills Auditorium. The peak attendance was 300 with as many as 500 different people attending, most for some part of the Feast. Speakers included Ray Wooten (*UCM*), Ed Martell (*UCM*), John Merritt (*Friends of the Sabbath*), Paul Haney (*Christ Fellowship Ministries*), Mark Gulley (*independent Waco, Texas congregation*), Jeff Ledy (*UCG, Lansing*), George Dewey (*Servants' News*), Rick Stanczak (*Likeminds COG Internet Forum*), Norm Edwards (*Servants' News*), Wes White (*independent Dallas, Texas congregation*), and Ben Mauldin (*independent Waco, Texas congregation*).

Special Music was presented by various vocalists, and also a Feast choir, which was directed by David Duff. Children's classes met daily, and several activities and studies were provided for the teens. Interactive Bible Studies were available most days before services. Youth Day activities included praise and worship songs, a skit, and special music presented by the teens. Seminar Day contained a 20-minute song service, and five different time slots, each with four seminars. Most of the seminars were repeated so that brethren could attend nearly every seminar that interested them. Nearly all seminars contained a discussion session.

Other activities of the Feast included get-acquainted hors d'oeuvres buffet, a fun show, several hymn-a-longs combined with family games, and a family buffet dinner. Besides all the local tourist attractions and restaurants, there

were many nature activities and hiking trails.

Ludington, Michigan

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matt 18:20). At Ludington, about 65 people met daily during the Feast. Others joined in the fellowship on the Sabbath. Over 90 people spent at least one day at this beautiful Michigan location. Each daily service began with special music, a short scripture reading and prayer. After group singing, a volunteer would read a section of appropriate scripture followed by opportunity for comments and questions from those in the assembly. Each service also included at least one prepared message, fifteen to twenty minutes in length, again followed by opportunity for comments and questions. We finished each service with singing and prayer. Over 30 of those attending participated directly in services.

No other activities were planned ahead of Feast time, but many activities did take place as the people made suggestions and others responded. These activities included dance instruction, discussion of the use of computers for study, bowling, swimming, volleyball, a trip to the state park, mini-golf, and go-carts. Of course there was much eating, shopping and visiting. The small group atmosphere made it possible to really visit with nearly everyone during the Feast.

Most of the people who attended live in Michigan. Some families came from Illinois, Maine, and Wisconsin. We were blessed with good weather most of the Feast. It was an especially great blessing to share in rejoicing and praising our Creator.

—Darrell West

Ocho Rios, Jamaica

At Ocho Rios, Jamaica, over 150 gathered together at the Church of God International (CGI) Feast site to enjoy powerful sermons, inspirational music, and solid fellowship. Although giving doctrinal sermons on the potential divinity of man and the Sabbath, Jamaican pastor Ian Boyne's leading spiritual theme concerned true Christians' need to actually practice a

faith that requires hard choices and suffering to serve God by obeying His law while realizing we only temporarily live as exiles in this evil world. He asked Festival goers about whether they were willing to give up their "Isaac," i.e., their foremost material desires. For the second half of the Feast, CGI ministerial chairman Ben Chapman spoke on such topics as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Y2K problem, and what occupations would and wouldn't exist in the World Tomorrow.

A unique aspect of the Ocho Rios CGI Feast was an evangelistic campaign service which about 30 members of the general public attended and which defended the belief that the Seventh-day Sabbath is still binding on Christians today. An ad in the local newspaper and tracts handed out by members advertised the service. Another unusual part of the Feast was the first annual awarding of the Herbert W. Armstrong Memorial Prize to one of seven laymembers who participated. This speaking contest was organized to defend and explain traditional COG doctrines while honoring Herbert Armstrong's memory. Each speaker was given up to 15 minutes to defend and explain why the Pentecostalist understanding of "tongues" as non-human languages was incorrect, which was this year's assigned topic.

The many social activities organized for this Feast site increased its necessarily fast pace. They included a nighttime barbecue on the beach, a sports day, a chance to climb Dunn's River Falls, a family fun and music show, a picnic (and swimming) at Cranbrook gardens, a singles mingle (group discussion), and rap sessions for the youth and married couples. This Feast site in Jamaica expertly combined inspirational messages, innovative practices, and solid fellowship activities, making it a model for emulation by brethren in America and elsewhere.

—Eric Snow, reporter

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[I see many good ideas in use at this feast site—especially the seminar for people who do not normally attend the Feast. However, I would hope that the speaking contest would be changed to expound a particular doctrine from the

Bible, not specifically from WCG tradition. If people are limited to teaching from Church of God tradition, there is no room for Christ to lead us into more truth. —NSE]

Daytona Beach, Florida

The Church of God Outreach Ministries site in Daytona Beach, Florida was managed by former CGI minister Manuel Rojas. It was quite an experience! Over 100 brethren gathered, many from Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Texas and the Caribbean for 8 fantastic days of edifying sermons, stimulating fellowship, utopian weather, and outstanding food. It truly was a "feast to remember."

Concerning the devastation in Puerto Rico, I thought that the island would almost be back to normal coming back from the Feast. It turned out, to my chagrin, to be the worst hurricane in 70 years.

—Angel Oyola

Giant's Causeway, Ireland

Greetings from Belgium. We've had a peaceful FOT in Ireland where about 30 interdependents met. Gregg and Caroline Gault did a fine job of organization. Some brethren had prepared messages and we had several Bible studies. We agreed to say that we were united in the Spirit, although we never met before and we had some minor differences in "opinions". We managed to do a lot of rejoicing together and participated in many group activities. It is amazing how much experience we had to share.

—Mireille Hodiamont

UCM Site in Keystone, Colorado

This was an absolutely wonderful Feast in Keystone, Colorado. There were about 115 of us at this UCM site, plus a few that wandered in and out from other nearby sites. We had great messages and wonderful fellowship with lots of folks from various backgrounds. God's spirit of peace and harmony was felt by everyone there. We got to meet a whole lot of Crows (the George, Richard and Bill Crow families), the Ed, Jr. and Patrick Martell families, Peter and Linda Huizer and

daughter and son-in-law Andrea and Richard Beymer, a whole raft of folks in the Jim Aschenbrenner family, Scott and Carolyn Scharpen, Pat and Nancy Arnold and family, and many more.

Ray Wooten and Larry Hendricks flew in on Thursday and were with us for Friday and Saturday. The weather was spectacular! We arrived on Sunday with snow falling and awoke Monday to about 3 inches of white stuff. The snow melted and it was warm (even hot) and sunny from Tuesday onward. The mountains were magnificent, the traffic non-existent, and the fellowship wonderfully warm.

We pray that everyone of you had a "best feast ever" and that you return home edified and rejuvenated.

—Linda Gentry

Felton, California

Wow! What an awesome Feast we enjoyed in Felton, California. There was definitely a diverse group there. People were free to be themselves.

There was clothing of all kinds: shorts & Tshirts, jeans and polo shirts, suits and ties, prayer shawls and yarmulkes. There was a great variety of music—a few WCG songs, Messianic music, contemporary praise & worship and old standard songs.

And there were lots of ways to praise our great Eternal and His Son—songs, musical instruments, hand raising and circle dancing. A large portion of each service was devoted to praise and worship. What a great way to start each day.

The Feast site was small—I'm guessing about 100. Just the perfect size to get to know basically everyone there. It had an intimate family atmosphere and everyone really enjoyed the two potluck nights we had to fellowship all together. It was small enough that the services were interactive which is just what we're used to.

Most important to us was that the children were an important part of each service. Almost all the music offerings were given by the youth. There was a scripture reading each day by at least one child. Our child, Justin, read twice and did a great job (if I do say so myself). They also participated in the circle dancing. And, of course, they enjoyed the musical instruments during

congregational singing.

—Missi Lara

Ozarks, Missouri

We started the feast under cloudy skies and thunderstorms. By Tuesday afternoon the clouds cleared and we enjoyed beautiful, mild weather. We heard messages from Jon Pike, Jim Rector, Helm Hobrath, Al Winters, Jim Wolfe, Jerry Simmons, Richard Close, Doug Kincaid, Henry Anderson, and Ed Harrison.

Margie Rogers from Roswell, NM, who is considered legally blind, was anointed and prayers offered. Her eyesight has begun to return as she is able to make out images and to navigate unaided. Nine individuals were baptized during the feast and two others planned to be baptized later.

We had one afternoon devoted to "drop-in" for the purpose of everyone getting better acquainted. On one afternoon we had a pot-luck picnic. On Thursday evening we had fun night where those who wanted to contribute could perform by singing, playing an instrument, or telling a joke. The program lasted for three hours!

The children and teens were included in our celebration of God's feast. The teens contributed to each service by reading from the scriptures. The younger children learned about building booths, the meaning of the feast, and making crowns. The teens, who had not known each other before coming together during the feast, came together with love and friendship. They performed as a choir—"Friends of Jesus"—and on Sunday they went to a local nursing home where they performed for the residents. I think they came away from this experience with a new perspective on life.

Those in attendance who are on the Likeminds forum gathered Sunday for a cookout and fellowship. Of course, anyone who wanted to attend was welcome and many did.

On Monday, the Last Great Day, everyone was invited to put all their leftover supplies and food into a pot-luck meal. This was an opportunity to share any food that was still in the refrigerator or ice chest that we didn't want to let go to waste and that we could share with brethren. It was one more chance to have

Discerning the Lord's Body

What is our relationship to the Savior? How are we connected to Him? What does this connection mean to us in our daily life?

The apostle Paul gives us some food for thinking when he said, "But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not discern the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick and a number sleep" (1Cor 11:28-29).

Paul was writing to the church in Corinth, but these principles apply to all believers, both in a physical and spiritual way. We should therefore give some careful thought as to how we discern the body of Christ, because a lack of proper understanding brings on serious consequences: For this reason many among us are spiritually weak and spiritually sick and yes even some of us are as spiritually dead people (example in Rev 3:1).

I think we can make this spiritual application can't we? Especially if we view, in total, all the splits under the banner of Christianity, as well as observing all the recent turmoil in some of the Sabbath keeping churches of God, with which we are familiar.

Now, in context, Paul is discussing the proper methods of observing the death of the Messiah, and it is important for us to take into full consideration why Jesus qualified to be our Savior. He was the Son of God, the spokesman for the Father, who created the heaven and the earth and all living things upon the earth, including you and me. He then chose to become the Son of Man and come to this earth to live, to suffer and to die for all the sins of mankind, past present and future. And because He was the beloved Son of the Father, His shed blood was worthy to make this full payment, and therefore His death justifies us in the sight of the Father and opens up the door for full reconciliation.

Therefore, in seeking to discern the body of Christ rightly, we can never bypass His death, for it is the foundation and fundamental to full fellowship with the Father.

But Paul seems to be amplifying the

basic fact about the suffering and subsequent death of our Messiah when he focuses our attention on the discernment of the Spiritual body of Christ, which is alive and active today.

In 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, Paul clearly uses a three-way metaphor comparing bread and wine to the body of Christ and to the church. He continues this discussion in Chapter 12, specifically in verses 12-27. In verse 27 he says, "Now you are Christ's body and individual members of it." As an analogy, this concept of "being the body of Christ" is not new to us. However, this may be part of the problem. We may not have proper discernment. If we consider it just another interesting analogy, and are not really applying the practical statements in 1 Corinthians 12 to our discerning the body, then we may not be learning what we should.

How **do we** really understand this relationship? How do you personally discern the body of Jesus Christ, of whom you are? For the purpose of this article, we will look at two concepts from 1 Corinthians 12:

1) These verses lay the groundwork for our relationship to each other, in Christ Jesus, and how we should be seriously concerned for the welfare of each other. It is foolishness to suggest that we would physically take a gun and shoot ourselves in the foot, on purpose. But this type of activity seems prevalent in the body of Christ today: one member injures another member and the entire body suffers the effect. In many cases we are spiritually weak and confused, spiritually sick and twisted, and even spiritually dead, existing as if there is no Life in us. Even though we may be very busy in our religious circles, the flesh is all too prominent in our works.

2) God has no unused members in the Body of Christ. If we are in His body, we have a purpose! "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body just as He desired" (1Cor 12:18). Part of "working out our own salvation" (Phil 2:12) is to comprehend what our individual "place" is in the body, and then fill it. (This understanding can come more

quickly with prayerful meditation in the Scriptures, and applying the five most powerful words in the book, "Ask and you shall receive.") It is also part of discerning the body rightly. "Now you are Christ's body, and individual member of it" is a statement of **fact** and not an analogy.

We are not only one body with Christ, but also one spirit: "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1Cor 6:17). Ephesians, chapter four tells us "*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*" (Eph 4:4-6).

In the same chapter Paul also lists some specific functions and responsibilities given to some within the body, all of which are for the purpose of equipping us for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ until we get to know, personally, the Son of God and attain full maturity, that exact maturity which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

This type of Spiritual growth comes by seeing (discerning) who we really are in the body of Christ and the privileges that already belong to us as His body. According to First Corinthians 2:12, as His body, we have already received the Spirit who is from God so that we might know the things freely given to us by God. But because the church at Corinth seemed to have had difficulty grasping the magnitude of being the body of Christ, the Spirit was quenched and less able to penetrate their fleshly hearts.

In the very beginning of 1 Corinthians, Paul tells this group of believers what is already available to them "In Christ Jesus". "I thank God always concerning you, for the grace (ability) of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift..." (1Cor 1:4-7). However, not discerning the body of Christ, some mem-

Continued on page 14

a gathering of brethren.

Typical attendance was 300 people with a high count of 375. Although we didn't all share the same points of doctrine, we came together with brotherly love, and all showed tolerance for brothers and sisters who didn't agree on all points. We joined together where we agreed and we didn't let any areas where we didn't agree cause any division among us.

This feast was one of the most rewarding, the most loving, the most peaceful, and the happiest feast I have ever attended.

—Gene Phelan

We will not be going back to Lake of the Ozarks next year as the Marina Bay facility has already been reserved by another group during that time slot. We will begin our search for a new location right away. Your prayers would be most appreciated in this regard.

I hope that all of God's people had a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles. It is quite a remarkable event that we continue to relive in our minds and hearts throughout the year.

—Jim Rector

Destin, Florida

The CEM Feast in Destin was terrific! They had over 1000 registered, with many other visitors. The weather was absolutely lovely. The messages were great, music was enthusiastic. We enjoyed the carnival and the fun show. Most of all, we've enjoyed some friends from long ago. We came away pumped up and enthused, ready to face the next year.

It was great to see the cooperation between CEM and the United Big Sandy feast organizers—many events were held in common. We were impressed by how hard the teens worked in setting up and providing music for the teen dance. We had about 150 (as near as we could tell) teens from at least three different church fellowships.

—Paula Frazee & Barbara Cain

San Antonio

Seth and I celebrated the Feast in San Antonio. It was a wonderful Feast for both of us. Seth felt that it was the best he had ever attended. This Feast

was filled with friendship, laughter and sharing. We had several catered buffets. On the night the Feast began we had a meal of sandwiches and vegetables before the "Welcome to Feast" short service. The spotlights were never pointed on the folks who ministered from the podium. They were focused on the banner which proclaimed, "Rejoice before the Lord". This action established the mood of the Feast. We had a Mexican buffet one night with a Mariachi band entertaining us. The music, food and fellowship was fabulous.

Another night, we had a barbecue while members of the group entertained by playing my era music. This was especially great because we got a chance to see Jim and Dot Ussery dancing. That same evening a clown came and entertained the children and the child in each of the adults. Most evenings ended in the hot tub, which was large enough to accommodate forty or so. We had one baptism, which was the highlight of the Feast for many of us. What a joyous occasion this is...to see someone come into the family.

There was much to do in San Antonio: market square, the Alamo, Planet Hollywood (which the teens visited along with the Imax), the missions which surround San Antonio, La Villita, Fiesta Texas, Sea World, great restaurants.

San Antonio was a great place to feast with God's family. There was not much problem with people pushing their own agendas, although there was someone who told some women who had participated in the Bible study that "women were not to speak in church". At least this was done later on an individual basis, rather than interrupting the study. The sermons were interesting. Ian Hufton especially used humor in his sermon, which is always nice. The humor was used well and helped make his points. Lovely!!!

—Wendy Hendrickson

Destin Sacred Name Site

I just got through talking to a friend who went to the Destin Sacred Name site, where about 175 assembled. Some of the leaders of this group had been having discussions on the Hebrew calendar and during the Feast they held a

Bible study on the issue. Basically, the conclusion of the leaders was that the Jews have no authority and the church should go by an observed calendar. They then passed out a paper with all the "correct" dates, and the people were informed that the Feast would be held next year about one month later than the Hebrew calendar. Since there was some dissension, they have decided to hold a fast day on the 24th for the "unity" of the group.

—Linda White

[This is the difficulty that always surrounds calendar issues. People are sincere in wanting to obey the scripture, but the scripture is not explicit on this issue. Where should the moon be observed? Locally? In Jerusalem? What happens if it is cloudy? When does the new year start? Can a calculated "time of probable observation" be used? Who has authority to decide if the moon was visible or to determine the "right" calculations? It has been my experience that most groups which attempt to determine a calendar for themselves split up into smaller groups—diminishing the clear command to assemble on the Feast days.

—NSEJ

"True Harvest Feast"

A small independent group of those the Creator has called from Eastern Canada met recently for a "true harvest" festival in the idyllic setting of the 1000 Islands in Ontario East. The Feast of Tabernacles was kept from September 20-27 according to the "observed calendar" revealed in scripture.

Those who lived nearby brought the harvest of their gardens to share at the Feast in the form of barbecues and lunches made with natural foods.

The small amount of prepared messages was greatly multiplied through the interactive study-based meetings leaving everyone with more than enough "baskets" of spiritual food to last until the spring festival season.

We rejoiced before our Father while enjoying the beauty of the area. We fished, golfed, took a boat tour to the renowned "Boldt Castle", played volleyball and baseball and enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere of the site. We gained greater understanding of our Creator's plan for mankind as depicted

Continued on page 14

"Discerning..." from page 12

bers of the church of God at Corinth were unable to utilize what was freely given them in Christ Jesus. Paul began his letter to them with these factual blessings, before addressing the multitude of fleshly problems they were experiencing.

Today, it seems that most Church of God groups have even less spiritual gifts than the Corinthians. We have few obviously miraculous healings—brethren who are still young are sick or sometimes die. We have almost no one whom the Eternal speaks through,

either by direct inspiration (prophecy) or in tongues (with a significant interpretation). Also, Church of God groups are much more divided than the Corinthians. It appears that all of the Corinthian brethren still met together and acknowledged each other as brethren, though they wrongly favored one of a few leaders over the others. Today, there are hundreds of groups, most of which never meet with the others, and many which would not acknowledge the others as brethren.

A prayerful study of this first letter to the Corinthians can give us an

insight into some of the problems and solution in today's church, by deepening our discernment of the body of Christ. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1Cor 6:19-20).

Self-examination (2Cor 13:5) in light of the Scripture, is always in order for the believers who desire to glorify God.

—Jerry Laws

"Feast Reports" from page 13

through the harvest analogies at our first "true harvest feast".

—the MacPherson Family, Summerside, PEI, Canada

Ocean Shores, Washington

Wow!! This year's Sukkot [Hebrew name for Feast of Tabernacles] celebration at Ocean Shores was the most joyful and spirit-filled I have ever experienced. There was a spirit of unity & love among all of the 120 participants at this festival, in spite of the fact that we represented several different independent congregations, denominations, and religious traditions. We had some terrific teachers, music, dancing and celebration. People traveled from as far away as Florida to celebrate with us.

This year's festival included a variety of teachers and speakers from divergent backgrounds. We were blessed to be able to meet, fellowship, form new friendships and learn from: Stephen Berkowitz, Robert Bodkin, John Christopher, Eddie Chumney, Doug and George Dolly, and Robert Somerville.

The speaking list for next year (Sept 24 - Oct 3) looks to be even better.

Dr Brad Young, www.gospelresearch.org/
Randy Fenton www.haydid.org/potter.htm
Dr John Garr, www.restorationfoundation.org/
Ken & Lenore Mullican, www.hakesher.org/
Doug & George Dolly www.ahavta.org/
Dean Wheelock (still tentative),

www.geocities.com/~hebrew_roots/
EddieChumney, www.geocities.com/heartland/2175/
Robert Somerville www.awareness.org/
Dr. Danny Ben-Gigi (Hebrew instructor)
Steven Berkowitz

The Feast of Tabernacles at Ocean Shores is a non-denominational, non-

sectarian event sponsored by Christian Renewal Ministries International (CRMI). Attendance is open and free to all. There are no "required" hotel-stays or meals. Since we provide airfare and accommodations for our guest speakers our expenses are quite high. If you would like to help us in this effort you can send a tax-deductible donation to: CRMI

Most of our speakers come from a "Hebrew-Roots" perspective. Only the Dollys and Berkowitz come from a "Messianic Jewish" perspective. (I do, of course, realize that the distinction between "Hebrew-Root" and "Messianic" is somewhat blurry at times). With the exception of these two and Dean Wheelock, our speakers come from a mainstream Christian background. In fact, Brad Young and Lenore Mullican are both professors at ORU.

We have specifically chosen these people because of the knowledge that they have to share. We feel that it is non-productive to invite speakers from the Church of God pool, because (with the exception of Dean Wheelock and Brian Knowles) they tend to be very limited in their knowledge and understanding.

We observe God's Feasts as joyous celebrations. Messianic dancing and singing have become an important part of this celebration. The Feast of Tabernacles at Ocean Shores may appear, to many, to be "Jewish" in its presentation, because we have added many of the "Jewish" customs that are given support in the Apostolic Writings (NT) and the Tanakh (OT). It is definitely **not** a place for those who lean toward anti-semitism or who hold to a dispensationalist theology. The Ocean Shores festival is also not a place for

exclusivists; it is an inclusive feast that is open to all.

We have been seeing mainstream Christianity moving toward an acceptance of the Biblical Holy Days and we are trying to build as many bridges as we can to facilitate that movement. We are bringing COG's, Messianics, mainstream Christians, and Jews together to **celebrate** the Feasts of the Lord. God has called us to be bridge-builders and wall-razers.

More information about the 1999 Feast of Tabernacles at Ocean Shores, Washington is available at: www.Shalom-CRMI.org/html/ftos.html

—Gregory Richardson

Christian Renewal Ministries International
P.O. Box 111 Auburn, WA 97071-0111
1-800-333-5208

Possible 1999 Feast Sites

Occasionally, *Servants' News* receives suggestions for possible Feast site locations. We have information packets on two possible sites which we would be happy to mail to anyone who is interested. The first site is the Best Western, Newton Inn, 2000 W 18th St S., **Newton, Iowa** 50206; 800-373-6350. It is located right off of I-80, 30 miles east of Des Moines. This motel could provide meeting, lodging, and dining space for 100 to 300 people. It would be a nice, all-in-one meeting place. There are interesting things to do in the area.

The other site is **Ft. Worth, Texas**. No specific facility was suggested, but several are available. For more information, ask for our package, or contact Phil Keener, PO Box 6993, Ft Worth, TX 76115; 817-921-2250.

—NSE ☐

Ministry

Speak and write about what life has taught you, not only what you have heard of other's lives and writings.

This is what's missing in so much of the preaching and teaching today! It needs to be a living experience with us, not just talking about God, but sharing our personal experience in the Word. This lack is the reason that so much preaching and teaching seems flat and empty.

It always seems that one's personal witness is what touches hearts and minds the most.

Not **all** that we teach will be from our personal experience. But is there any better way to teach? Who would you rather learn to snow-ski from—one who has learned about it only from books, or one who has had personal experience with skiing?

It's easier to talk about things that skim the surface. This is why that route is taken by most in the ministry. But to go inward and push out that spirit is avoided by most.

The Spirit of God has to be personalized in your human vessel. The writing and speaking then become an extension of the New Creation—and that makes all the difference. It's the difference between just talking about the Word, and feeding the people the Word. Your individual character is still in it, but then it means Christ is also! Thus we have a dramatic difference in the speaking and writing.

He will let you function, but He will teach you that without Him you can do nothing (John 15:5). You will rejoice in the fact that He lets you function and be a part of it. Our spirit has to be part of the work—He has not made us robots.

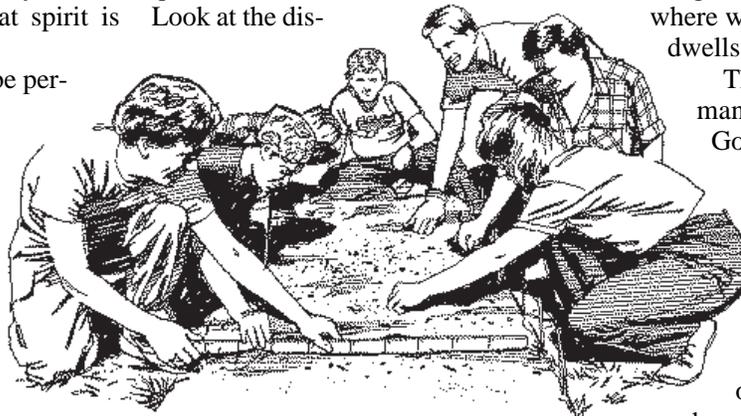
Of course here lies some of the danger also, because it is so easy in this human framework to think that we are doing the work, and when pride seeps in it's deadly. God cannot work with

proud hearts (James 4:6). We will then be laid aside by God.

A true minister of the Word who will constantly feed the people **must** be under the discipline of the Holy Spirit so much that this reliance on self is constantly dealt with. A true minister of the Word ministers God's Word from a personalized point of view. He is not just talking about the Word but the individualized New Creation of Christ within his individual make-up also goes out to the people.

Thus we have different ministers manifesting the Spirit of God in different ways, as their individual characteristics go out with God's Spirit as part of the New Creation.

God works with the vessels of His choosing, and it's not because of their qualifications. Look at the dis-



ciples, just 50 days before they were filled with power—on the night Jesus was taken into custody—they all fled like cowards when the battle got thick. What kind of soldiers were they?

But God would use it. He would use it to show them a little more of what self is. I've often thought of the many times I have turned my back on Jesus, and went on to do my own thing in the world.

A few months back, while I was studying into the gospels, I noticed only two men came to claim the body of

Jesus while He hung there on the cross. They were not part of the twelve. Now stop and think about this for a minute. Here was a man that you were close to for over three years, went everywhere together, laughed with him, ate, were close for three years. Then the night the police arrest him you not only forsake him, but after they kill him, you don't even go to claim the body—not like leaving the body in a morgue somewhere, but on a cross for the vultures and other birds to devour!

That had to tear them apart when they thought about it afterwards—even though you know you're forgiven, that's got to be agony.

But God would use this, as one of the things that would show them self for what it is. After they had produced failure of the greatest kind **then** they would be ready to be used by the Master. Just 50 days later, men who acted like cowards would be filled with the Power of God to go on and astound the world—all because now the Life of the One who died on the cross would be in them to produce! Praise be to our wonderful God.

That's what must be in place if God is going to use us. We must be taken through the Romans 7 experience, where we come to see "nothing good dwells in me" (verse 18).

That's what is missing in so many who try to minister in God's Temple today. They fail to see self for what it is, therefore they bring their strong confident selves into the Temple of God instead of coming there with fear and trembling (1 Cor 2:3). The result is some of the chaos that we have been seeing in the Churches these past few years.

For proper ministry the vessels must be taken through the Romans 7 experience. That must be in place if we are going to minister in God's Temple today. Otherwise we will bring self into God's Temple to defile it, and then we stand on very dangerous ground.

As God teaches us the vital lessons to see Him, and self for what it is, we will boast no more in ourselves, but our boast will be in the Cross of Jesus Christ (Gal 6:14).

—Tommy Willis

Letters & Responses

We print a representative sampling of our mail—both positive and negative. We do not include names unless we are fairly sure that the writer would not object. It helps if writers tell us how much of their name and address they would like printed.

COG Splits Want Market Share

LETTER: September 30, 1998
Dear Norm,

Thank you for your work. I find it encouraging. As one with a short history as a "Sabbath-and-Holy-Days-observant Christian", and no history in the WCG as a member, I find the squabbling and competitiveness of these various WCG off-shoots appalling. Don't these people understand that they have a common purpose?

I see a lot of concern over "market share"; former WCG members being the "market". If cooperation and brotherly love replaces competitiveness, I believe the splits of the recent past and those to come may eventually be recognized as multiplication rather than splintering. After all, what one organization of people can cross all the cultural and other barriers that characterize our world? May God bless and guide all our efforts.

—Larry Little, California

RESPONSE: Much insight, Larry! The COG split-off groups are going after the "market" of the former WCG members. The main way they do this is by claiming that they are the rightful heirs of the WCG's or of Herbert Armstrong's teachings. Some groups pick out a particular era (60's, 70's, 80's or 90's) and claim that was the best time, and they are faithful to those truths. Many groups make changes to WCG and Armstrong teachings, but are very careful to "prove" that their changes are biblical—that they are additional truth revealed from God. Unfortunately, group 'A' will often point to a change made by group 'B' and say "see, group 'B' has departed from the truth taught by Mr. Armstrong", without even any discussion at all of the biblical merits for the change made by group 'B'.

Paid ministers leaving the WCG are often told that they will be hired by a split-off group only if they bring a significant tithing-paying congregation with them. The ministers often work overtime, saying

whatever they have to say in order to get members into their group. Members, having been "burned" by the WCG, are now much more likely to attempt to verify if a minister is giving them accurate information. When they find that they are being led to or manipulated to increase some group's "market share", they often become disillusioned and drop out of all groups.

The net effect of all these WCG split-off groups "seeking after market share" has been to greatly reduce the size of the market.

What the splinter groups should be doing is "going after a new market"—seeking to preach the Gospel to new people, whomever they are most suited to reach. If individuals would look to the Eternal to serve Him in the way that He has spiritually gifted them, He would use them. There is probably a need for some to print booklets, some to publish magazines, some to make TV broadcasts, etc. There is also a great need for much to be done on a local level—and there are thousands of "30-year experienced" brethren to do it. There may not be big salaries available to do any of this—but Jesus never promised that His followers would be wealthy.

The warning in Matthew 24:44-51 is inescapable. Brethren who are feeding (teaching truth to) others will be rewarded at Christ's coming. Brethren who are fighting with each other will be punished.

—NSE

Will UCG Teach UCG Doctrine?

The following was contained in Les McCullough's recent letter to the ministry:

"In addition, we plan to print another four to six booklets before April 1. The working titles are: What Happened to the Church Jesus Built?; How to Understand Bible Prophecy; Are We Living in the End Time?; America and Britain in Prophecy (or perhaps, Where Are The Israelites?); and Holidays or Holy Days, Which Should We Keep?"

Many of us still find it tragic that some within our midst do not believe in many of these truths and have come into the UCG on the misunderstanding that we have accepted **all** of the Tkachian changes except we still keep the Sabbath (they do not believe it is sunset to sunset or that it is a Sign).

For ministers and their close friends in UCG (who go around on the minister's behalf) causing immense division and driving out 1/2 of their local church (which they do not go out to seek after) to accept Tkachism is beyond belief. They refuse to uphold the doctrines of UCG and give us the most sloppy and neo-protestant 'sermons' you can possibly imagine.

When will they just leave us alone and go back to where they belong?

—UCG Member, Australia

If ministers are paid by a church organization that disseminates its doctrines from headquarters, they should be willing to preach what that organization pays them to preach. Ideally, organizations should allow ministers to disagree and provide a forum for airing different scriptural understandings of a particular doctrine. This would allow everyone to learn and grow.

Leaders usually say that they do not want an open doctrinal forum because it would confuse everybody. But the current situation where people preach a variety of things for no apparent reason is even more confusing. What usually happens is local ministers say nothing about doctrines they disagree with, so it is impossible for others to tell if the minister just "doesn't like" the doctrine or if he really has a Bible-based reason for disagreeing with headquarter's teaching. In many cases, it seems that ministers are simply preaching what their congregation wants to hear or they are afraid to acknowledge that they preached some error while in the WCG and do not want to reverse themselves on anything that they taught while in the WCG.

We all need to realize that the Eternal judges our hearts (Jer 11:20), that He knows exactly why we do what we do, and that we are accountable for it (Matt 12:36, 2Cor 5:10).

—NSE

Rapid City Feast Comments

LETTER: October 20, 1998
Dear Mr. Edwards,

Thank you so much for your major contributions to the Feast in Rapid City [interactive studies and sermons were conducted from Gatlinburg via teleconference, see article on page 9]. Our Father in heaven is wonderful, and He did a great job bringing everything together for us, as I'm sure He did for many others.

[personal paragraphs deleted]

After the first day we were blessed with practically perfect weather for the remainder of the Feast and even a few days after. We were also blessed with a fine piano (keyboard) player and wonderful special music.

It turned out to be a far better Feast

than I ever imagined six months ago. In spite of certain published comments, there can be no doubt God's Spirit was in Rapid City for the Feast. I believe it was His hand that caused it to happen in the first place. I certainly didn't plan anything like this to start with. I think maybe some of us grew a little in faith and began to grow up in our wonderful elder brother, Y'shua.

Thank you.

—Bill Buckman, South Dakota

RESPONSE: It was enjoyable to work with you and the others at your Feast. Thank you for helping us to prove the technology that we hope to use to help others.

—NSE

Government Paper is Needed

October 14, 1998

Dear Norman Edwards,

Please continue sending me the *Servants' News*. They are a good part of my education and I really do appreciate them!

The issue that had *How Does God Govern Through Humans?* was and is needed to be read by all the saints. I think some things should be required reading, so thank you for all the time and work you put into that article.

[Personal paragraph deleted.]

Thank you again for all your time and work; it is very much appreciated.

—ML, West Virginia

RESPONSE: Thank you for your encouragement! We hope that our readers will make copies of the paper and give it to those who might read it and be helped by it. We think this is a much better way of sharing it. We do not try so send it to people whom we know little or nothing about.

—NSE

New Splits Are Copies of Old WCG

LETTER:

October 14, 1998

Dear Mr. Edwards,

I am writing to inform you that I would still like to continue to receive the *Servants' News* each month. I haven't noticed that it is becoming a very informative newsletter containing all kinds of interesting information. Yet, when I saw the notification that I received the last SN, I thought on it deeply and then realized that it does indeed mean that much to me. I have also noted that other readers of your publication are in the same exact predicament as me, (nowhere left to go after leaving the various COG groups).

I have been out of both WCG and later CGI for nearly ten years (too long to be away), but unfortunately, I have discovered that the new splinter groups are no more

than a carbon copy of the WCG I left years ago. (Too much authority-conscious in the ministry.) I believe God wants His flock to be more active in demonstrating their lights to the world, and not sit back and wait until it's too late!

Yes, I need this publication! Keep me on the subscribers list, please!

Thank you very much for this opportunity!

—Herbert Kimmel, Illinois

RESPONSE: We will gladly keep sending you *Servants' News* for as long as you want it. If we have not heard from someone in any way for over a year, we ask them if they still want it. We have no way to tell the difference between someone who is reading every issue and someone who was just curious and after an issue or two never opens the envelope.

—NSE

Association for Christian Development

LETTER:

November 2, 1998

Dear *Servants News*,

I am writing with a recommendation and a request. On the back page of your newsletter you have a listing of literature resources. I would like to suggest that you offer *The New Millennium* magazine, available from The Association for Christian Development, P O Box 8058, Federal Way, WA 98003. I believe this magazine would most appropriately be listed in the *Mature Literature* section.

Being a 25 + year veteran of the Churches of God traditions, I find this publication to be consistently inspiring, thought provoking, and motivating in the Christian walk. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

—Jo Beth Vines, Stevensville, Montana

RESPONSE: Your idea is a good one. I am sending a letter to Ken Westby of the Association for Christian Development and asking him to send some copies for us to give away. From the issues of the magazine I have seen, it covers news, biblical history, and Christian living subjects.

I met Ken Westby at the Seattle Friends of the Sabbath conference. As I understand it, he left the WCG in the 70's because of error and injustice there. He has supported his family through his own job, and has served quite a few brethren for all of these years. He does not make grandiose claims about himself or the work he is doing, but has been encouraging and accepting of other groups even though they may understand some doctrines differently.

—NSE

Planning to Begin Local Evangelism

LETTER:

October 31, 1998

Hi, Norman, how are you?

I'm glad I had a chance to meet you and your wife and speak with ya'll a little bit in Gatlinburg. It was quite a rush to find folks that I could not only speak with regarding topics like gov't & authority & tithing & individually preaching the gospel, etc., but also be of like mind on these issues. I'm really pumped up with enthusiasm now that I don't feel that I have to first convince people about my perspective before I can discuss ideas for personal evangelism.

I received a package with the last two SN's and the GOVHUM03 as well as the Lit/List and I want to make an order for some of the literature that you offer. Also, Norman, I am considering giving some public Bible studies as well as starting something like the trucker's study group mentioned in SN, so I would like recommendations/pointers/tips about procedures (from you or others who are doing the same thing) as well as some multiple copies of basic stuff. I think it would help to have numerous copies of different groups' order forms, and enough hard copies to fill a table. Also, might I recommend that you pull together a literature list that is truth focused (we should do X, we shouldn't do Y) but that doesn't include the "Why WCG/HWA/(name your group) is/was wrong" sort of stuff. This sort of in-fighting material could easily give new folks a bad impression.

I'm working on a couple of different articles right now and I will try to get something to you as soon as I can. I also wrote a poem a couple of days ago, and after I play with it a little longer I'll send it to you.

[Long literature order deleted]

I know that this is an obnoxiously large order, but I do read all of this stuff and I feel like I need to do a little catching up on what people are thinking before I start writing stuff that's about as interesting as yesterday's news. A lot of the conclusions that I had come to in my own study that I thought were unique, (and they were, in Global, I guess) I found peppered (salted?) throughout your Tithing, Sabbath, and Gov't articles. I want to avoid unnecessary redundancy, especially if there is an article out there that says what I was going to say more fully and completely.

—Thanks, David Bankson, Alabama

RESPONSE: Your letter is very encouraging. We have talked with quite a

few other people who have come to a very similar understanding. They accept the Sabbath, Holy Days, clean meats, British Israelism, multiple resurrections, the ten commandments, the avoidance of non-Biblical holidays, rejection of the Trinity, and many other doctrines held by most Church of God groups. But they have also come to see that the doctrines of Church Government, Tithing, and other issues are simply not taught by the scripture. Many have also come to realize that the WCG rejected some truths that are understood by people with Bible-believing Jewish or Christian background. If we read the stories of Biblical characters, or if we read about the various churches in Revelation 2 and 3, we see that truth almost always comes mixed with error and good mixed with bad. Yet the Eternal calls many of them "His people" or "His church".

Some have suggested to us that since we have studied other groups so much that we should write our own doctrinal statement and start a group that has "the most truth". I think this is humanly impossible because we cannot possibly study any where near everything that everyone else has studied. Some people have written entire books on the meaning of just a few verses in the Bible. We will never learn it all. The scriptures do indicate, though, that we should go on learning. However, we will be judged by what we do with what we know, more than we will be judged by what we know (Matt 12:36-37; 19:16-22,29; chpt 25; Luke 10:13-16; 10:25-37; 12:1-3; 12:47-48; 19:12-26; Rom 2:2-16; 1Cor 3:10-15; 6:9-10; 2Cor 5:10; Gal 5:19-21 {The word "heresies" in the KJV is much better translated "factions" in most modern translations—this is not referring to "doctrine"}; Eph 5:3-5; Rev 20:12-13; 21:7-8; 22:14-15). I started writing all of the scriptures I could find about this and the list became rather long! It will make a good article in the future.

Obviously, I am happy that you are interested in beginning a Bible Study like the trucker's Bible study. I think most Sabbatarians need to live and teach what they already know more than they need to strive to learn more. We plan to make a literature list oriented for readers of Shelter in the Word. It will contain only Basic literature and Shelter in the Word articles. It may be a month or two before we have it ready. We mailed all of the literature that you ordered today.

—NSE

Baptism Request, Southern Florida

LETTER: October 24, 1998

I think you are doing a great job and pray for our Lord to bless you and to keep you in health. Request for renew of literature for myself and also a new subscription for my son, Tom. Please send him items on holidays, Sabbath, baptism in form of back issues as well as your most recent too. Our addresses are: [addresses deleted].

Tom will be released from prison on February 10, 1999 and wants to be baptized after release. Since we are in a remote area with no known person around to perform this event, would you have any suggestions. I am/was a member of Global up to June of 1997 and don't have transportation or any way to get to Tampa. Thanks for your help in this matter. Please send answer to me soon.

Quotable Quote in The New Yorker: "The family is the essential presence—the thing that never leaves you, even if you find you have to leave it".

—Melbourne, Florida

RESPONSE: We will continue your subscription and send your son this year's back issues. We are happy to hear that your son would like to be baptized. The scripture does not give qualifications as to who can and cannot baptize. The large numbers of people who were baptized in the early chapters of Acts strongly imply that many of the believers baptized each other—it would have been extremely difficult for only the twelve apostles to baptize all of those people. Philip was chosen to help serve tables in Acts 6, but he baptized the Ethiopian in Acts 8.

Herbert Armstrong and the WCG made a big fuss in their latter years about who "was authorized" to baptize people and "lay on hands"—especially for ordination. Nevertheless, Herbert Armstrong was baptized by a Baptist minister, and was later ordained by a room full of "lay-members". In the four baptisms that I have participated in, one or two people accompanied the person being baptized into the water, and afterward as many believers as cared to, stood around and laid hands on him or her.

What stops overzealous brethren from baptizing people who are not ready? The same thing that stops overzealous ministers from baptizing people just to keep their membership list up. Either the Eternal stops them, or nobody does. People must be taught that baptism is their expression of commitment to the Eternal and His way. The "status" of the baptizer means nothing. If the person has not repented and sought Christ, the baptism is of little meaning—even if done by the head of a church group.

If your son is ready now, I do not know

of a reason to wait until he is out of prison. Prisons usually have a chaplain who can arrange for religious requests such as these. People who are converted need other believers with which to fellowship, even if they live some distance away. It is good if these people can attend and/or perform the baptism. I hope that you know some long-time believers that live near your son who would be willing to go and baptize him, and to be available to either write, call, or visit afterward. **If you do not know anyone, maybe someone who is willing to help will read this letter and contact Servants' News.** If they contact us, we will put them in touch with you. After all, if we, as believers, cannot baptize and fellowship with those who are requesting such, what business do we have in planning any kind of evangelism?

—NSE

Sacred Names, New Moons Answer 2

In a previous issue (July 1998, page 12), Rina Burch wrote a letter titled "Keep Sacred Names and New Moons" to the entire Servants' News staff. Norman Edwards responded to it, but another *Servants' News* associate editor also submitted a response:

Having been born, raised and lived my 60+ years in the United States of America, I learned and speak the American English language. My first Bible was an "Old English" translation, i.e. King James Version or Authorized Version. The words God, Father, Son, Jesus, Christ, Messiah, and all others were written per the King's English of the 1600's. Therefore I use the names God and Jesus, because it is in my native tongue.

In Acts 2:6 the people heard the messages in their native languages. I have found nothing in the Bible that condemns a person for using names of their native language. God confounded the language for a purpose, see Gen 11:1-9, especially vs 7.

Correct me if I am wrong; but, don't judge me. Only God can judge me. I have not seen proof of "Sacred Names" usage in the Bible. I do not take God's name in vain. Show me why you believe I should be condemned. Maybe I have missed something in the translation, but I will continue to talk to God and about God in my own language.

I am not being judgmental of other people's usage, and I expect them to not judge me by my understanding of God's words. In the beginning God spoke with Adam and Eve. Did He speak "English" as we read our Bible today? **No.** Did He speak Hebrew? I doubt it. Does He expect us to know His language? I think not. If so, He would have to provide us with it. He has chosen not to do

that yet. Even the Old Testament is in Hebrew, not the original language of Genesis. Language has evolved since the beginning of time.

Although I am not a contributor to SN, I do follow most of the same doctrines as espoused by the editors. As a proof reader I do put in my two cents' worth occasionally regarding good grammar. However, I do not feel the need to attempt to change anyone else's beliefs.

—Anne Wibbelsmann

Believes in God of Entire Bible

LETTER: October 18, 1998:

Thanks for the back issues. I profess no religion, only the one true faith that is revealed in the scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments. I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I also believe that God is, as He says He is, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Christianity and Judaism both witness to the one and only eternal God, but they have both been clouded by man-made doctrine and prejudices that have clouded their vision.

The true faith lies in between. I guess, if I felt it necessary to have a title, which I don't, you could call me a First Century Christian or a Messianic Jew, whichever title one would prefer. We are living in exciting times and things are happening so rapidly that there may be a good chance that we will see the reconciliation of the House of Israel (Ephraim) with the House of Judah. United once again, the tribes of Israel will serve one king, Jahshua (Yeshua), the only begotten son of YHWY, who is YHWY. Does all of this make sense? If not, I will be overjoyed to elaborate, for I love to share my faith in Yahshua with anyone and everyone and I love YHWY's holy words.

Shalom,

—Larry

RESPONSE: When we receive new subscribers via e-mail, it only takes a few seconds to send them back a message asking about their religious background. Most who reply to our question say that they are former members of the Worldwide Church of God and now a member of some other church or fellowship. But there are also a number of responses such as yours which show a simple personal devotion to studying the scriptures and doing what you understand from them. We will print your letter because we hope that all of our readers can learn to be comfortable around people who are striving for the same goal, but have a different background of Bible learning and fellowship.

—NSE

Book by James Tabor

LETTER: October 8, 1998

Dear Mr. Edwards,

First I want to say please continue sending me Servants' News. I always read it back to the green page.

The reason I am writing is to ask if you have read *Restoring Abrahamic Faith* by Dr. James D. Tabor? The book is out of print but I have several copies. Dr. Tabor is a Professor of Religious Studies at North Carolina University and you often can see his name in Biblical Archaeological Review.

It is a little over 100 pages long and is an easy read. I read a lot of stuff every week, but I think that this book is one of the most important books I've read.

If you haven't read it, and wish to, I can loan you a copy if you don't forget to send it back when you finish. I respect your Biblical scholarship and I am interested in your opinion. You can call [number removed], write or FAX [number removed].

Favor and peace to all who seek YAHWEH's truth.

—Nick Pecoraro, Florida

RESPONSE: I have read most of the book. I have spoken with James Tabor once and exchanged numerous e-mails with him. I believe he is a sincere, honest, and extremely gifted man. He is in the process of producing a new Bible translation, *The Original Bible Project*, which may become the best Bible for an English-speaking person to study the meaning of the original languages (though still not perfect). I have read samples of the translation, and he seems to be doing a good job of translating the Hebrew and Greek text, *even when its meaning seems to disagree* with his theology.

Restoring Abrahamic Faith (Tabor's book that you mentioned) places a great emphasis on studying and living by the Old Testament. It says that individuals must repent of their sins and turn to the Eternal (YHVH) and his law. It effectively shows how some of the prophecies that Christians typically apply to Jesus do not fit their literal interpretation. (This does not conflict with the New Testament as the NT makes clear that people in the first century were unable to understand Jesus' mission from the OT scriptures. The disciples were constantly looking for someone to set up a literal kingdom, and Jesus constantly had to tell them otherwise.)

Tabor points out much of the false doctrines and evil that makes up most of Catholicism and other mainstream Christian religions. He rejects it and I do, too. He also rejects the error and evil that is found in

much of Jewish history and tradition.

I disagree with Tabor in that he does not believe that the New Testament is of itself an inspired message. If he finds anything in it that appears to conflict with the Old Testament, or just "does not make sense", he does not believe it is accurate. Here are some quotes from Tabor with my response:

Tabor, page 80: "Most of these ten references to the Servant in Isaiah clearly refer to the *people of Israel* personified as YHVH's instrument or agent for bringing Torah to the nations".

To my knowledge of history, the Jews have never taken Torah to the nations. The world is knowledgeable of the Old Testament primarily because of small Christian groups (not usually the big organized churches) that printed Bibles and placed them throughout the world. I believe that most of the people who have done this are primarily descendants of the "lost 10 tribes of Israel", but these Bibles were not sent in the name of Israel, but in the name of Jesus and his Church, or assembly of believers.

Tabor, page 86: "Yeshua taught the same *Way of Salvation as that found in Torah and Prophets*—heartfelt repentance of sins, turning directly to YHVH God in faith, forgiveness and salvation through His grace, and obedience to all the commandments of Torah (Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 18:9-4)...Text and traditions which go beyond or contradict these fundamental doctrines must simply be rejected. If we do not find our doctrines clearly set forth in Torah and Prophets, then we are on shaky ground indeed."

The above point is in conflict with many parts of the New Testament. Jesus the Christ clearly taught that He came to reveal new knowledge and that He was the sacrifice for our salvation. (Matt 10:32-33; 11:27; 16:16-17; 19:21; 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 2:28-32; 22:19-20; John 3:13-16; 6:51; 10:7; 14:6; Rev 5:8-9). Mr. Tabor would also agree that it is not possible to live by "all the commandments of Torah" today because many are possible only when there is a functioning temple and priesthood.

Tabor, page 87: Yeshua [Jesus] likely anticipated the dire times in which he lived, based on the prophecies of Daniel (Luke 13:2-11; 32-35; 19:41-44; 21:10-28; 23:27-31). He mistakenly thought that his generation would usher in the Kingdom of God and he gave his life as an offering for "the many" according to his understanding of Isaiah 52:13-53:10 (see Luke 21:29-32).

I am not sure why Tabor believes that

Yeshua [Jesus] thought the Kingdom would return soon when there are whole sections of scripture where He tries to convince the disciples that it will come much later (Matt 24; Mark 13; Luke 17:20-24; 19:11-27; 21; Acts 1:6-8). Tabor both believes that the New Testament is not accurate and believes that Yeshua was a man who was confused about his mission. In other words, Tabor's view is that we cannot believe that any specific story or chapter of the New Testament is true, and even if we had some way to prove that it was all true, we could not trust that Yeshua's statements represented the will of the Eternal.

Tabor, page 91: "Likewise, Ezekiel writes that the Messianic Prince, in the millennial Kingdom of God, will serve with *his sons* in the Temple (Ezekiel 46:16-18). The early Christian traditions, now preserved in some of the apocryphal Gospels, that Yeshua married Miriam (Mary) of Magdalene and had children by her were likely suppressed by the Roman church which insisted that both Yeshua and his mother be sexless and celibate for life."

The above shows that Tabor sometimes gives as much weight to apocryphal books as he does to the New Testament, and blames the "Roman Church" for altering the record to produce a celibate Jesus and Mary. If the "Roman Church" was able to do this, why did they leave the job half done and not change the other scriptures that mention the physical brothers of Jesus? (Matt 12:46; 13:55; 27:56; Mark 15:40,47; 16:1; Luke 24:10; John 19:25.) I believe that the Roman Church eventually rose to power and did a lot of evil, but the writings of the early "church fathers", 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries do not show a single, centralized Roman church. It took some time for the Bishop of Rome to establish himself as "first among equals".

The idea that all NT manuscripts were dramatically altered does not fit the records of the earliest manuscripts we have. The significant content of all of these manuscripts is at least 95% in agreement. Manuscripts have been found throughout the Mediterranean world and there are none that have whole sections of books altered. Furthermore, the writings of the Church fathers, from the 2nd to 4th centuries frequently quote the New Testament books and argue about what they **mean**, but they virtually never argue about **what the text should be!** If the text was being greatly revised during this time, we would expect much argument, but there is almost none! Finally, I know of **no** writings—Jewish, Roman, or other—from the first few cen-

turies that claim that Jesus, the apostles, or the New Testament books were frauds. If this was the greatest hoax of all time, why would enemies of the Christians bother to argue against their beliefs when they could just expose the hoax and be done with it?

How can I give any credit to Tabor's work when he holds this view of the New Testament? Because his work seems very much unbiased. He is not a member of a church organization and does not alter his work to please any. His goal seems to try to make the reality of historical record that the Eternal has left for us clear to others. Tabor does not say people who do believe in Jesus as savior will be condemned. But he points out that the scripture gives almost no indication that any OT figures expected a Messiah to die for their sins. Yet, they are listed as righteous in the NT (Heb 11). Many Christians have never thought of this. Also, the "sheep" in Matt 25:31-46 do not seem to have any concept of Jesus as Savior either, yet they are given eternal life. Exactly how does that work? I am not exactly sure and will not speculate here.

But I believe the New Testament message is valid, and I have experienced Christ powerfully at work in my life. All of us who have received and believed the message of Christ, and experienced His miraculous power are responsible for living by it! We have enough real problems and enemies without trying to condemn people like Mr Tabor who are striving to know the same Creator and to live by the same law that Jesus lived by—a law that was indeed "glorious" (2Cor 3:11).

—NSE

Hierarchy Perpetuates Wealth, Power

LETTER:

September 2, 1998

Dear Norman,

Thank you so much for the latest issue of *Servants' News* and most especially for updating and expanding the thesis "How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans". I have told many friends about this new publication and feel that it is a much-needed and valuable document—not just for ex-WCOG people, but for all who participate in organized religion.

I'm reading the article for a second time now and I have two small points to make concerning church "leaders". As you point out repeatedly, that Christ is the head of the church and it's only truly authorized leader. **Allowing any person or organization to come between a follower of the Christ and Jesus (Yashua) quickly becomes idolatry.** It would appear from the history of the church in general and,

more recently, the history of the Armstrong organization demonstrates that this leads to dissension and continuous splits in church organizations.

First, on page 27, you quote scriptures from Ephesians and Corinthians and follow these verses with this comment: "These verses leave no doubt that Christ is the Head, and the apostles and the prophets *are* the principal leaders of the church." (italics on "are" added). A closer reading of those scriptures shows in all cases, Paul is speaking in the "past", "present perfect" or "past perfect" tense rather than present tense. This simply means that the action taking place has already occurred and does *not* indicate occurrence in the present time. Jesus indeed gave some to be apostles; the (household of God) was indeed founded on "the apostles and the prophets" (who gave us today's scriptures—new and old Testaments, respectively); and God did indeed appoint apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles etc. among the "charter" members of the church.

None of these scriptures demonstrate that such are the "leaders" of the church today. Notwithstanding that God may indeed inspire prophets, teachers, evangelists, etc. in His church today and may even give them direct revelation, none of these is set apart to be our "leaders".

RESPONSE: I must disagree with you. Paul told the Corinthians to "earnestly desire the best gifts" (1Cor 12:31). Also, "brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues" (1Cor 14:39). These are in the present tense. These gifts are still to be desired and received. The only instructions we have on the functioning of the body of Christ are in these letters of Paul. There are none on how to handle an assembly "without any gifts".

LETTER: As Jesus so often pointed out, the "greatest" in His church are the "least": that is, they are the real, honest-to-goodness *servants* of His people. They do whatever they can to exhort, teach, help and otherwise assist their fellow servants in following God's plan. They clearly *do not* "exercise authority" over their fellow servants. (Matthew 20:25-28).

This is a unique thing about God's church—the only authority to be exercised over its members is that of its Head, the Christ.

"Verse 13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. 14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard

all these things: and they derided him. 15 And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men: but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:13-15) When you select yourself a "king" by agreeing to let a "minister" have authority over you, you will be trying to serve two masters—Jesus Christ and the "minister"! What is "that which is highly esteemed among men"? Wealth and power are the things "highly esteemed" by men! Wealth and power are what make up "mammon"! (mammon—Greek *mammonas*—"treasure, or riches where it is personified and opposed to God") Why is wealth and power "mammon"? How does one obtain wealth and power? By setting up a hierarchical system which allows the ruler and his minions (pastor general and his "ministers") to have power over and to take money from all those people under them! This hierarchical system is an abomination to God because the person at the top is an idol.

Leaders don't need to be "selected": they will demonstrate by their actions that they are suitable to "imitate" in their desire to serve others—not exercise dominion.

RESPONSE: I largely agree with you here. The modern approach tends to be to find someone with a nice suit, deep voice, and firm handshake (or someone who has been to the right religious school), "ordain" them to be a minister, and then give them "authority" over people. Men who are "full-time" ministers usually want to know exactly what they will be paid before they begin serving. This is completely opposite to Paul's approach, who taught that it was acceptable to receive money for preaching the Gospel, but chose to support himself in some cases in order not to cause offense. The scriptural approach to recognizing the Eternal's leaders is to see them doing what needs to be done (a "test"), then to recognize them as leaders. "But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons [servants], being *found* blameless" (1Tim 3:10). Each believer must ultimately decide which leaders he or she will work with. Some brethren were commended by Christ for finding that men claiming to be apostles were liars (Rev 2:2).

LETTER: Second, you make a common mistake and one that was taught by hierarchical ministers and one used as a chief Bible source for the authority of church "leaders" in the WCOG. That is the misunderstanding of Hebrews 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They

keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."

Paul (or the writer of Hebrews) has already given his admonition as to how to treat the "leaders" in the church: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." (Hebrews 13:7) When you quote this verse, you correctly point out that *proistemi* ("rule"-KJV) ("are over you"-NIV) does not indicate any legal authority nor indicate the exercise of dominion over others. It means to "manage" or "oversee" and (again, as you indicated) is more like the idea of managing one's family than running an organization.

The 17th verse is an admonition having to do with getting along with **civil authorities** rather than church leaders and is a good indication that Hebrews was written by Paul because it echoes closely his admonitions to the church in Rome as given in Romans 13:1-8.

RESPONSE: It may be possible that Hebrews 13:7 is about civil authorities, but I find few reasons why it could be and several reasons why it probably is not. First, the entire chapter is about one's relationship to the Eternal and brethren—the author is still talking about leaders in the congregation in verse 24. Second, the Greek word for "those who rule over you" in Hebrews 13:7 is *hegeomai*, whereas Paul used the Greek *exousia* for "authorities" in Romans 13:1 Third, worldly rulers do not watch out for the lives of those they rule and "give account" to God, they exercise dominion over them (Mark 10:42). Finally, Paul is concerned that these rulers will have "joy" and not "grief" in their ruling. That makes sense if they were fellow believers, but civil leaders rarely ever grieve if they are disobeyed, they simply invoke some kind of punishment.

LETTER: We should give proper respect and honor to those who teach us; to those who carry God's word to the unconverted; to those who demonstrate God's "gifts of the Spirit". Certainly we should not allow anyone to exercise dominion over us and especially not to allow anyone to come between us and our Lord and our God.

"But Jesus called them unto him, and said, ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority upon them. **But it shall not be so among you:...**" (Matt 20:25-26).

These may seem like small points. From the very beginning (3Jn 9), the grief and sorrow that have afflicted God's people and the church (because of the striving for power (serving mammon) among those who would be leaders) has been, and continues to be, an enormous price to pay for this sin of idolatry.

—Clay Willis, Georgia

RESPONSE: I would have to agree that at one time in my life the WCG and Herbert Armstrong were idols in my life. The reason I say this is because if I found something in the Scripture that conflicted with church doctrine or practice, I would have followed Armstrong or the WCG because I believed I needed to follow "church government". However, I probably could not have proved this doctrine of "church government over the Bible" if my life depended on it.

I think this same problem affects many people in the various groups today. It is much better for a person to say he cannot explain numerous doctrines from the Bible, than it is for a person to simply accept the doctrinal statement of an organization. If a person realizes that there is much that they cannot explain, they will keep studying and Christ can teach them. But when a person accepts a doctrinal statement, there is little motivation to learn—they may be put out if they find something different than their organization's doctrinal statement.

—NSE

Feast-keeping: Need a Certain Place?

LETTER:

October 11, 1998

Dear Norm,

I just received the *Servants' News*, and as we have some that meet for Bible Study, I noticed some of the same questions that we have all the time. And that is, how do you know where God has placed His name? I thought I would write this short article that might shed some light on the subject.

Under the Levitical Priesthood, the people were required to go to the Tabernacle and later to the Temple. God showed them through miracles where this was.

Today, men think God has given them authority to select a place for Him to put His name, and He has to follow. Let's look at what Christ told the Samaritan woman in John 4. Verse 19, the woman said to him:

Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews says that in Jerusalem, is the place where one ought to worship. Jesus said to her,

"Woman believe me the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father.... But the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshipper will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:19-21, 22-23).

So, where does God place His name today?

When God calls you and gives you His Spirit, He places His name in you individually. Paul had the same problem. In Corinth, these people were coming out of the pagan temples, and they couldn't get it out of their heads that they were not supposed to go to the temple where the High Priest was. Look what Paul told them: (1Cor 3:16-17) Do you not know that you are the temple of God, that the spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. (1Cor 6:19 and 2Cor 6:16 and Eph 2:21).

Now, who is the priest, today? (1Pet 2:4-10) Here, Peter is talking to the church, and calling them priests. I noticed in your comments, you used Acts 18:21 to say you should go to some designated place. But a careful study of that verse will tell you that "I must keep this Feast" is not in the original manuscript. This only breaks the ice. There is much more. If you feel this would be a benefit to someone, feel free to print it. We are enclosing a donation to help with expenses. By the way, your family and mine left the same organization about the same time and for the same purpose.

—G. Cochran, Georgia

RESPONSE: I completely agree with your point that there is no need, today, to worship in a specific place, such as Jerusalem. Believers are the priests and the temple, and where two or three are gathered together, Christ is with them (Matt 18:20). Of all the various places where Feasts are held, I see no way to determine in advance where "God has placed his name". (After attending at a site, one might feel the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit there, but that does not help one decide where to go.)

Nevertheless, it appears that the New Testament custom was to observe the Feasts somewhere, even if in a local assembly.

The expression "I must by all means keep this Feast in Jerusalem" is not in the Alexandrian Greek texts, which are older, but it is in the "received text". Nearly all Bible scholars agree that neither one of these families of texts are copies of each

other, but they go back to a common ancestor text, which we no longer have. A phrase like this which appears in some and not in others was either 1) an addition made after the original (as you suggest), or 2) a deletion from the original. In either case, the addition or deletion had to be well enough liked among the authorities and/or the people who copied the Bible to be propagated to other texts. My method of evaluating such textual problems is as follows:

1) **Does the phrase make sense in context?** In the case of Acts 18:21-22, the verse makes much more sense with the phrase than without it. Why? Verse 22 says: **"And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch."** Paul was in Ephesus, far to the northwest of Jerusalem. Caesarea was the port city one would use to get to Jerusalem. Antioch was a port city far to the north of Jerusalem—it is impossible that Caesarea was a stop on the way to Antioch. In English, we speak of "going up to Chicago" or "going up to Denver" and the words "going up" can mean either going North, going higher in elevation or sometimes nothing at all. In Hebrew, "going up" to a city almost always refers to going to Jerusalem—something people usually did for the Feasts. Jerusalem was higher than most other cities in Israel, so they went up. This Hebrew concept is apparent in the Greek Scriptures if we look. The Greek *anabaino* means "go up", "come up" or "ascend" and is used 82 times in the New Testament in a variety of ways. It is often used in the expression "go up to Jerusalem" (Matt 20:17-18; Mark 10:32-33; Luke 2:42; 18:31; 19:28; John 2:13; 5:1; Acts 11:2; 15:2; 21:4,12,15; 25:1,9; Gal 2:1). The only place where it is used to go to a city that is **not** Jerusalem is Luke 2:4, where Joseph is going from Galilee to Bethlehem, a trip that passes through Jerusalem. There are four verses where the term "go up" alone (Greek *anabaino*) is clearly referring to going to Jerusalem because that is the context (John 7:8,10; 12:20; Gal 2:2). Luke was writing to Theophilus, a Greek. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he introduced the context of Jerusalem (Gal 2:1) before he used the term "go up" to refer to Jerusalem (Gal 2:2). I believe Luke would have done the same thing. Without the expression "I must by all means keep this Feast in Jerusalem" in verse 21, it appears that Paul went hundreds of miles out of his way just to greet some unnamed brethren in Caesarea. With that missing phrase, the expression "go up" is in its proper context, and Paul's purpose is clear.

2) **Does the phrase make sense with**

other Scripture? Paul makes a specific point of being somewhere for a Holy Day in other scriptures. He did not leave Philippi until after the days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6). Paul specifically hurried to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost (Acts 20:16). Later, Paul stayed in Ephesus through Pentecost (1Cor 16:8).

3) **What motivation would copyists have for either adding or deleting the phrase?** The motivation of most copyists must be the accurate copying of the Scripture. Otherwise, we would not have a Bible today. But we can see, both in our own day, and throughout history, that people are quite able to claim the Bible as the basis of their belief system, while practicing and believing things contrary to it. If a copyist accidentally left out a phrase, and if the phrase did not fit well with the theology of future copyists, they may decide to leave it out of their copies without much checking of other manuscripts. People will let things happen "by mistake" that they would never do overtly. As many Greek "Christians" departed from keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days, I can see how they might not be as diligent to verify and prove a phrase like "I must by all means keep this Feast in Jerusalem". However, it is very difficult for me to believe that the phrase was added later. Who would want to add it and why? I have never seen anyone suggest that Jews or "Jewish Christians" somehow secretly put their teaching into Greek New Testament manuscripts. The only way I think this could be an addition is if someone copying the manuscript had other sources of information about what Paul did, and inserted the phrase to clarify verse 22. But if that is the case, then the scripture is likely to be true, even though it is not original.

My conclusion is that Paul and certainly the other believers continued to keep the Feasts. If they could not be at Jerusalem, they kept them where they were. This is based on the numerous casual references to the Feasts which readers were expected to understand. However, there is no clear command to keep Feasts in the New Testament. We are reminded to be "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb 10:25). This scripture is not restricted to Sabbath assemblies. Most believers have met numerous friends and sometimes their spouses at the Feasts. The Feasts picture important events in the plan of the Eternal. Most fruit of Feast-keeping has been good.

—NSE

“Marketing Plan?” from page 1 had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it (Acts 4:13-14).

And daily **in the temple**, and **in every house**, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ (Acts 5:42).

And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him **to the council** (Acts 6:12—*Stephen delivers the entire message of Acts 7 before the council*).

Then he [Stephen, *after preaching his long message*] knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” **When he had said this, he died.** (Acts 7:60).

...At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.... Therefore **those who were scattered went everywhere** preaching the word (Acts 8:1,4).

Then **the Spirit said** to Philip, “Go near and **overtake this chariot**. Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, **preached Jesus to him**” (Acts 8:29).

But Philip **was found at Azotus [25 miles away from where he was a few minutes ago]**. And passing through, he **preached in all the cities** till he came to Caesarea [70 miles of numerous coastal cities] (Acts 8:40).

And when he [Paul] had found him [Barnabas], he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year **they assembled with the church and taught** a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26).

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, **the Holy Spirit said**, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul **for the work** to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2).

And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the **synagogues** of the Jews.... (Acts 13:5).

And **a vision appeared to Paul** in the night. A man of Macedonia

stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, **concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel** to them (Acts 16:9-10).

And he [the jailer] brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” So they [Paul and Silas] said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house (Acts 16:30-32).

Therefore he reasoned **in the synagogue** with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and **in the marketplace daily** with those who happened to be there (Acts 17:17).

So he [Apollos] began to speak boldly **in the synagogue**. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, **they took him aside and explained to him the way of God** more accurately (Acts 18:26).

But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily **in the school** of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9).

And they took him and brought him to **the Areopagus** [a Greek Council], saying, “May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? (Acts 17:19.)

I [Paul] have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:33-35)

Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the **prisoners** to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself **with the soldier who guarded him**.... Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and **received all who came to him**, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confi-

dence, no one forbidding him. (Acts 28:16, 30-31).

Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: **in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently**, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, **what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches** (2Cor 11:23-28).

We can see that the places of preaching varied greatly: the temple, synagogues, homes, schools, market places, prisons, and their own assemblies (churches). The methods for attracting an audience varied also. Sometimes, miracles attracted a crowd. Other times, they spoke to an existing religious audience. Public trials (often on false charges) also provided audiences. Sometimes, there seems to be no apparent reason for an audience forming—either the people were attracted simply to the conviction of the speakers, or they were drawn to listen by the Eternal. Sometimes, there was no large audience—a believer or two talking to a listener or two.

A few other overall characteristics of Gospel preaching are evident:

1. Preaching the Gospel was the highest priority in the lives of those who preached. They would rather die, be beaten, or imprisoned than stop preaching the Gospel.

2. The preachers relied completely on the Eternal and themselves to preach the Gospel. They did not hire horsemen, bands, or entertainers to help them attract a crowd. They were not continually seeking the favor of religious or political leaders to help them attract crowds and avoid persecution. They did not start corporations, political

parties, or military-like units.

3. Money was not a primary factor in Gospel preaching. The Bible contains no mention of sending money to a person or place so that Gospel preaching could begin there. There is no mention of Gospel preaching being canceled or not progressing due to lack of funds. While the Bible teaches that those who preach the Gospel should be able to live by it (1Cor 9:10), the role of money in preaching the Gospel is rarely mentioned in the scripture.

No Human “Master Plan” Needed

When we consider all of the above scriptures, we see that no human “master plan” existed. The apostles and other teachers traveled and spoke to others as the Spirit led them or as the needs became apparent to them. There is not one hint of any kind of “planning meeting” among the apostles to determine how they would take the Gospel to the world. (Some people believe Acts 15 was a church-wide “ministerial conference” where such plans could have been made. But if one reads the chapter, it is clear that the meeting was initiated by those in Antioch and was just between those in Antioch and Jerusalem. No effort was made to involve other areas which had already heard the Gospel. The letter from the meeting was addressed only to Antioch and the nearby regions.)

In spite of the New Testament record, it is still easy to find single human organizations, each claiming that it is the one that will preach the Gospel to the six billion people in the world. Obviously, such statements are designed to make believers think that that organization is the “true Church” and to encourage their members to contribute heavily. Have you ever wondered if the leaders of such organizations plan to claim responsibility for preaching the Gospel to the World when they are judged by Christ? (2Cor 5:10). Will they accept responsibility for possibly millions whom the Eternal wanted to reach and they did not? Will they try to insist that the only ones who should be in the first resurrection from their day are the ones reached by their organization? Or will they accept that Christ called and taught many people without their knowledge? I believe that when most of these “organization leaders” appear before Christ in judgment that they will be quite

willing to accept whomever He calls His own. **So why are they not willing to accept and acknowledge that Christ has believers outside their organization now?**

Even if one organization had nearly endless monetary resources, determining how and where to preach the Gospel to a world of 6 billion people is a task complex beyond all human capability. There are so many different religious groups and nations today with such a wide variation in understanding, practice, and leadership, it would be impossible for one man to understand how to reach them all.

This writer once asked the head of a fairly large Sabbatarian organization what kind of broadcast he thought would be necessary to explain the New Testament in a way that Jews could understand and accept. The head of the organization responded by saying that if the Jews wanted to be converted, they would have to listen to and obey the same teaching that he was preaching to Christians.

It is wonderful to know that Christ is able to reach people with the message that will cause them to respond. Even humans with long experience in international evangelism realize that the preaching of the Gospel must answer the big questions of people in the culture in which they live. The Eternal cannot really be viewed as King and Master of the Universe if those who preach about Him cannot answer basic questions of people in a specific culture. For example, people from a culture that practices polygamy may want to know exactly where and why the Bible forbids it. As another example, converts from Judaism may ask about which of their traditions they should continue to follow. A preacher cannot be credible by telling them to “forget all traditions” when there are some that are practiced by Christ and his followers in the New Testament.

We can be confident that our Father has a “master plan” for preaching the Gospel and that He will see it through. We simply have to be willing to be a part of whatever plan He has for us. It is possible that His plan for you is that you work hard at a job and give money to someone else who preaches. Maybe your purpose is to be a good example that others will see—a shining light. But

it is also possible that the Eternal may want you to talk to share what you know with another individual or maybe a room full of people. He may someday show you that He wants you to quit your job, go somewhere else, and begin teaching there. We need to be ready to serve Christ, and we need to be actively seeking His will and the gifts of His Spirit (John 5:30, 1Cor 12:28-30).

Neither Group Size Nor Money is The Issue

Many Sabbatarian groups have come to realize that Christ is the real, living Head of the Church and that He is capable of governing any number of believers and groups (not just the human head of one organization). Small Gospel-preaching efforts are beginning in a number of places. People are repenting and being baptized as a result of them.

However, it is important for those in small groups to realize that they are not somehow better than those who heard the Gospel from and now assemble with a corporate church group. We must all realize that we grow at different rates—Christ works with us as He sees fit. It certainly is a doctrinal error for one man or group to teach that they are the only one with whom Christ works directly. On the other hand, the great diversity of doctrines within independent groups shows that they must have some doctrinal error, too. All of their different doctrines and practices on the nature of Christ, calendars, Holy Day-keeping, sacred names, form of services, role of women, etc cannot all right. We must realize that we all probably have some error, and strive to learn as much as we can, and follow what we understand to be true.

The big church organizations need to **stop** teaching that they are the primary place where God is working and that the only effective way to preach the Gospel is to give money to them. They need to realize that large amounts of money and modern marketing plans are not what is needed to preach the Gospel. But also **little groups and individuals** need to learn that little amounts of money, marketing plans and gimmicks are **not** the answer to preaching the gospel

Small ministries and individuals have a lot of freedom to seek the Eternal’s will and do whatever He leads them to do. They also have freedom to

invent or copy some idea to preach the Gospel that is contrary to biblical instruction and example. We at *Servants' News* have observed some disturbing trends over the past few months in groups large and small. We will not mention the names of the groups, but will mention what we believe to be mistakes and hope that those who can do something about them will change them. We also hope that others, hoping to be used of the Eternal to preach the Gospel, will not make the same mistakes.

Christ Does Not Need Gimmicks
Network marketing church organization. We received letters from one organization that was promoting a network marketing "church". They recommended that a person purchase inexpensive booklets from them (\$50.00 minimum order), mark the booklets with his own name, and then sell or give them away. If anyone ever gives an offering or begins to tithe to this "church" as a result of those booklets, the person who first gave the booklets would receive 20% of the new people's offerings and tithes. If the new people ever begin to pass out booklets, then the original person also receives 20% of their tithes and offerings from people they "recruit". This extends to three levels of "down-line" (a term familiar to network marketers). Most network marketing organizations give fancy titles to a person who has achieved a certain amount of "down-line": supervisor, manager, director, etc. In this "church" organization, a person with successful downline is called (you guessed it) a "pastor." The promotional letter said absolutely nothing about whether a person had spiritual gifts and how one might go about teaching and caring for the needs of those they have taught. It assumed that any person who was able to get responses from booklets was to be considered a spiritual leader.

We realize that some of you have a hard time believing this, but the promoter of this network marketing "church" was absolutely serious. He had eight booklets written with a combined total of over 600 pages on subjects such as the Sabbath, Holy Days, clean meats, the calendar, and (of course) tithing. We have seen this group's booklets (though not their network marketing plan) recommended by other ministries. We do

not understand how people can make merchandise of the gospel in this way, but **the reason they keep promoting it is because some confused brethren are participating in it!** If you are ever tempted to try to turn the truth of the Bible into a money-maker, please pray to the Eternal about it, or talk to some stable person who will help you out of it. If you know someone who has this problem, please help them (Gal 6:1-2).

Corporate logo and image development. Some groups spend a great deal of time and money developing a corporate logo and "corporate image". This has been shown to be an effective way to market products—especially when there are many companies selling very similar products. A logo and a distinct "market image" provide "market differentiation"—a way for people to see one brand as different—hopefully better—than all of the rest. **But is the Gospel of Christ so similar to other religions that it needs a logo to differentiate it? No!** But are some church organizations so similar to other church organizations that they need a logo and "image" to differentiate them? **Yes!** To outsiders, many "Church of God" groups seem identical to each other. A logo and marketing plan are a way to promote one church organization over another.

But does the Bible teach that we need different church organizations, each with a distinct image? Did Peter, Paul, John and the other apostles each have a logo? Did they stamp it on their letters so people could easily identify it? Did they encourage congregations to display their logos at their meetings? Did not Paul teach us not to identify with specific leaders and factions? (1Cor 1:10-15; 3:3-16.)

Trinkets in exchange for contributions. For years, many religious groups of all kinds have offered some kind of gift in return for a contribution. Some even offer a series of increasingly bigger gifts for bigger contributions. Groups that use these programs will usually tell you that they are effective—that people will write a check or give a credit card number if they know they are getting "something", but they are hesitant to simply give something for nothing tangible. It does not matter if the thing they are getting is not worth anywhere near what they paid for it—most people are

used to getting a "bad deal" now and then. This is all probably true—but the principles are not Biblical.

Can you imagine the apostles offering a pebble from the yard of Jesus' house in exchange for a contribution of a certain amount? Could you imagine the apostle Paul offering fragments from one of his ship-wrecks in exchange for a contribution? Or maybe Titus could have picked up some cheap jewelry in one country and offered it as a contribution inducement when he preached in another country where the jewelry would be considered "novel".

The problems of this should be obvious. Christ died for us while we were sinners. He gave of himself with no promise of getting anything back. Believers are to love each other as Christ loves us (John 13:34). How can they begin to have that love for others if they cannot even give \$50 to a ministry without having to get something back for it? People need to learn to give to a ministry because they believe in what it is doing and they want to serve the Eternal by supporting it. We are called to give our lives to Christ (Rom 12:1). How can we give our lives if we cannot give a few dollars?

For years, Sabbatarian groups were largely avoided the offering of trinkets in exchange for contributions. This was primarily because these groups taught that the Levitical tithe had transferred to the New Testament ministry. Now that many Sabbatarians realize that the Levitical tithe continued to go to the Levites until 70 A.D and never was transferred to "church leaders", they are not contributing nearly as much to the preaching of the gospel. The solution to this is not to "butter up" people by offering them pens, paper-weights, plaques, and other paraphernalia in exchange for their financial help. The solution is to teach a commitment to Christ like that of Barnabas, who sold his land and gave it all to the early church (Acts 4:36-37), then went on to preach and teach himself for many years.

If a ministry is in financial need, if the Eternal is not providing for it and those who run the ministry do not know why, they can literally use the principles of Matthew 18:15-17 to resolve the matter. They can first pray to the Eternal and ask Him to show them what to do. He may want them to make changes before

continued from previous page

he blesses the ministry. This writer has often asked the Eternal to send a person to me who will give me the answer to a specific question. Several times, He has done it. But if the Eternal does not answer, more people who know the condition of the ministry should be involved—to pray to the Eternal and to make suggestions for possible change. If the Eternal does not hear that, then it should be taken to the church—the congregation—those the ministry serves. This will probably be done by letter. The letter should not be a plea for more money, but should ask those served if they will support it so it can continue, if they want the ministry to change, or if they feel that the ministry has outlived its purpose. A biased letter will probably produce a biased answer. But an honest letter will probably produce an honest answer. Those running the ministry must be willing to accept the fact that if the Eternal does not provide the funds, that He may not want the ministry in its present form.

Tape and Literature Marketing.

The Bible says that the Gospel is to be preached freely (Matt 10:18; 1Cor 9:18; Acts 20:33-35; 1Tim 6:5-6). Indeed, very few individual brethren would try to charge someone for attending a service or Bible study, or for personally teaching them from the Bible. But when individuals and groups begin sending tapes and literature on a regular basis, the costs mount up. In some cases, the Eternal seems to provide the necessary funds for such ministries, but in other cases, He apparently does not. Those producing the tapes and literature have the choice of either charging for what they produce, or **not** producing it. If the producer believes that the tapes and literature serve the Eternal, and if people are **willing** to pay for it, why should he cease producing it? Also, most such ministries will make their material available free to someone who specifically explains that they cannot afford it and requests that it be sent for free.

When a ministry does charge for its material, it is essential that they still have the best interests at heart of those they serve. They must not simply run their ministry to maximize profits. Businesses often have “sales” and claim to save you money while they are

really trying to trick you into buying a product that you may not need, or into paying more than necessary (a \$30 chair for \$22 sounds good unless you discover that another store regularly sells it for \$20). Such deception should have no part in a ministry of the Eternal. A ministry should promote its most edifying material. It should not promote poor tapes and literature that are “slow moving.” The goal of any religious ministry is to please the Eternal and do his work, not to maximize an accounting statement.

What Should We Be Doing Now?

We hope that those involved in ministries will think about these things. Christ does not need us to invent a “marketing plan” for Him so His Gospel can be preached. **What he needs is people willing to dedicate all of their lives (not just a little) to Him so He can use them.** Rather than bring various worldly business ideas into the preaching of the Gospel, we need to be continually reading that Bible so we can think like our Father in Heaven thinks. We need to realize that this is Satan’s world, but that living the Eternal’s way of life is still the best—for now and for eternity. We need to overcome our own sin as well as help others with theirs. If you have a ministry, do it right. If you know others involved in ministries, you may be able to encourage them to do what is right. The apostle John put it this way:

¹⁴This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that **if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us...** ¹⁹We know that we are children of God, and that **the whole world is under the control of the evil one.** ²⁰We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true...] (1Jo 5:14,19-20, NIV).

—Norman S. Edwards

Do It!

Get into the Word,
Learn the Almighty's plan.
Mature in His arms,
Become a whole man.

—Lyle

“How To Keep Feast” from page 1 whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,

The above quotation is from the KJV. Since it includes the word “lust”, it almost sounds like it is all right to sin a little by “lusting” at the Feast. Also, since the expression “whatsoever thy soul desireth” does not specifically mention food, some interpreted it to apply to amusements, gift shops and the like. But is that what this verse is saying? Let us read the verse in its context in a translation which I believe is technically more accurate here:

²² Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field. ²³ **In the presence of the LORD your God,** in the place that he will choose as a dwelling for his name, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. ²⁴ But if, when the LORD your God has blessed you, the distance is so great that you are unable to transport it, because the place where the LORD your God will choose to set his name is too far away from you, ²⁵ then you may turn it into money. With the money secure in hand, go to the place that the LORD your God will choose; ²⁶ **spend the money for whatever you wish—oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever you desire. And you shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your household rejoicing together** (Deut 14:22-26, NRSV).

Deuteronomy 14 Does Not Support Lavish Feast Spending

The NRSV is similar to many other modern translations. It simply says that people may buy whatever **food** they want—they do not have to buy the same kind of food that they sold to obtain the money. The Hebrew *avaw*, translated “lust” in the KJV, has the *piel* stem here and is better translated “desire” or “wish” as above. It does not refer to anything unusual or sinful.

From verses 24-25 we see that only the people who “lived too far away” were told to turn their tithe into money. Is it

only these people who can spend their money on any entertainment that they desire? Do these verses mean that people who live near Jerusalem must eat their tithe at the Feast, but that only those who live a long distance away can sell it, then use the money for other things besides food? That would seem to be unreasonable and pointless.

In reality, these verses are only talking about “eating before the Lord”. They say nothing about purchasing anything except food. Furthermore, the food named is in the form of “raw materials”—sheep, oxen, wine, etc. The verses do not talk about paying someone to prepare food for you (a steak dinner at a restaurant). Obviously, when ancient Israel kept the Feast, they were all keeping the Feast—there were not thousands of people who worked the whole time serving in restaurants and entertainment attractions. In the Millennium, the Feast will be similar. Everyone will keep it—there will not be an “unconverted” group of people who are busy trying to make money from our Feast-keeping.

Indeed, the Church of God doctrine of saving 10% of one’s income as “second tithe” to be spent at the Feasts required that many people spend it on expensive restaurants and entertainment. They had *much* more money than what was necessary just to buy food and lodging. We do not have room to show the difficulties with this doctrine here, but let us say that the expressions “first tithe” or “second tithe” never appear in the Bible. For more information, write for our article *How Do We Give To the Eternal?*

A typical “Church of God” Feast day often involved listening to a sermon in the morning, then asking a friend or two to go out to fancy meals and then “do something” together. Brethren at the Feast were often separated by their economic status in life: The wealthier ones stayed in the expensive hotels, ate at the expensive restaurants and went to the expensive entertainment. Brethren with less money went to completely different establishments. People without friends or with very little money stayed late after services hoping to find someone who would include them in their plans. There is no doubt that these Feasts had some good group activities and that the

poor and friendless were sometimes included by kind individuals. But most of the planned organization of the Feast was making sure that everyone heard sermons—there was much less emphasis on making sure that everyone was able to spend a lot of time meeting other brethren and enjoying conversation and food with them.

Please do not misunderstand me. **I am not saying that going to restaurants or entertainment places at the Feast is sin.** We have to do the best that we can in a world that, in general, ignores the Holy Days. In ancient Israel and in the Millennium, governments and business all prepare for the Feasts and cooperate so that only minimum essential work has to be done during that time. Our society cooperates with the Feasts as long as we pay people their standard fees to do what we need. **However, I am saying that the orientation of the Feast should be on spending time with other brethren: talking, preparing food, and eating together—not on paying others to serve or entertain us.** With the exception of an assembly on the first and eighth day, the Bible does not say very much about what we should do at the Feast.

With our understanding of Christ, spiritual food should be even more important than physical food. Deuteronomy 31:10-11 requires the law to be read every seventh year at the Feast of Tabernacles. But much more of the Bible has been written since that time. We have so much more to learn. We should have the Holy Spirit teaching us even more. It is much easier to share these things in an environment consisting primarily of believers.

Using the Feast as a luxurious “vacation with sermons” was informative and fun for many “Church of God” people for many years. The scriptures do not forbid most of what was done. **But it is difficult to claim that what was done came directly from the Scripture.** It was our interpretation of the scripture. The scriptures are not very specific, and we developed our own traditions for keeping the Feast. Others, studying the scriptures apart from our tradition, may come up with some different conclusions on how to keep the Feast. We should not condemn them, but be willing to work with them.

Improving Feast Observance

We should consider our own practices of keeping the Feast in light of the 1 Corinthians 12-14 teaching on spiritual gifts. Are there ways where we can more closely follow these principles at the Feast?. Our previous issue (*SN* August, 1998) contained an article explaining the need for everyone to bring spiritual things to “feed” each other at the Feast. The Feast needs to be structured so that brethren can do that. There needs to be plenty of opportunity in interactive studies and in fellowship situations for brethren to encourage one another. The feast should bring believers together—creating sort of a “family reunion” of the family of the Eternal. Everyone, young or old, should come away from the Feast talking about the people they met, the new friends they made, and the help they received with their Christian life.

The following are a list of concrete suggestions which should help improve the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles in the coming years. We plan to implement all of these suggestions to some degree in the Butler State Park Feast site in 1999. Some of the other people who help to sponsor Feasts have also recently expressed an interest in doing some of these things at their 1999 Feast of Tabernacles.

1. Central Accommodations & Facilities

If brethren are staying 20 minutes away from the meeting facility, they will spend several extra hours during the Feast just driving. Taking someone home with them to visit, or coming from home to an evening activity at the main facility will take an extra 40 minutes of driving. If brethren are staying 20 minutes in opposite directions from the facility, it may take an hour and a half for one to drive to the others place and back. While these things do not make visiting impossible, they make it very difficult.

Contrast this with a Feast where most brethren are staying in either one, or a very few nearby motels. It is very easy to go back and forth between activities, organize a swimming party at a motel pool, or just stroll through the halls and lobbies talking to brethren as they pass. Also, it is relatively easy for individual family members to pursue

like interests with individuals in other families: mothers with sleeping babies may want to stay in a room and talk to other moms, children may want to swim, teens may want to do sporting activities, dads may want to attend a Bible study session or watch a "World Series" game. This is not to discourage some activities for the whole family, but there are times when family members do pursue separate activities (a three-year old does not play basketball and Grandma may not swim). When that happens, it is nice to be living close to other families and easily share activities.

In both ancient Israel and the Millennium, people would be surrounded by joyous Feast-goers. Choosing Feast sites where the meeting place and most of the accommodations are close together helps to produce this effect.

2. Set Up Facility for Interaction.

The typical Church of God services are set up theater style: A lectern with a microphone in front, and chairs crowded together facing the lectern. This induces people to simply watch and listen to the front—to be spectators. The setup of a building and room can greatly encourage interaction. How this is done will vary somewhat depending on the size of a group, but we offer the following suggestions.

a. Do not set up many more chairs than needed—people are less likely to interact when they are separated by many chairs—nor can they hear each other if they speak.

b. Set chairs in a semi-circle. it decreases the "spectator" feeling by allowing people to see the faces of some of the others rather than just the backs of heads.

c. Try to arrange for one or more side rooms near the main meeting room. These are helpful for mother's rooms, children's classes, teen studies, etc. It may even be good to designate a nearby room as a place for people to go who are not getting much out of the main study and would like to discuss some other subject. Is that heresy? Well, Christ and the apostles were not always in the main "court of Israel" in the temple, but sometimes in a "side room"—"Solomon's porch" (John 10:23; Acts

3:11; 5:12).

Sites with more than 100 people should consider these things:

d. Avoid making rows more than 10 chairs wide. Long rows make it difficult for people to get up to go to a microphone or for people to pass a microphone.

e. Interactive studies are frustrating if you cannot hear everyone. A microphone will be needed for the main speaker, and at least will be needed for questions and comments. One method is to place an "audience microphone" on a stand in an aisle in the middle of the audience. This provides a natural way of ordering the questions and comments—people speak in the order that they line up behind the microphone. Unfortunately, some shy people with good things to say will not walk up to the microphone (either they won't talk at all, or they will speak from their chair and many will not hear them). Another approach is to plan for someone (get a teen involved here!) to take a microphone to whomever raises their hand to speak. A cordless microphone is much easier to pass around.

3. Plan To Eat Together as Much as Possible.

For most people, it is difficult to meet someone new for the first time, and immediately begin a long conversation or plan an activity. However, during the process of preparing, serving, and eating a meal, there are many natural conversation-starters. But more than just conversation, Feast meals should encourage conversation on meaningful and spiritual topics. When one is eating in a restaurant with many people who are **not** keeping the Feast, there is a tendency to avoid spiritual subjects that might be offensive or "weird" to others. It is easier to have meaningful and spiritual conversation when among believers and when it is encouraged by a short prayer or encouraging word before the meal, quiet background music praising the Eternal, etc.

Implementing this concept of "feasting together" is not always easy—it must be considered before a site is chosen. Many convention facilities have strict rules prohibiting people from bringing any food into them. They

will often claim it is for health reasons, but usually they simply want to sell you their more expensive food and service. (You can try asking for an exception: one conference facility let us bring dry snacks if we purchased coffee and tea from them.)

If you find a hall that allows you to bring your own food:

a. Provide generous snacks and drinks in or near the main hall after services. This encourages people to stay much longer and talk afterward—often about the service, especially if it was inspiring. Food is always welcomed by children—parents need not worry about feeding them. For people who do not eat big lunches, this may be their lunch. Much money can be saved by buying the food in bulk at a warehouse-type food store. You can probably pay for it by placing a box on the table for contributions.

b. Organize a "potluck" meal. This may sound difficult when many people are staying at motels without cooking facilities, but it is amazing how resourceful people can be. They can buy prepared food, buy "sandwich-fixings" and make them, buy a disposable bowl and salad-makings, etc.

c. Bring in specialty meals, such as pizza, Mexican food, submarine sandwiches, or whatever is available "to go" locally.

d. If a kitchen and people with the appropriate skills are available, cook a meal yourselves. These can be extremely memorable experiences.

If your hall does not allow you to bring your own food:

e. Have the establishment provide snacks and or meals. The main drawback to this is that it will be expensive.

f. Plan some groups meal at a large nearby restaurant. Many restaurants will offer a private room and/or discount prices for large groups making reservations well in advance.

g. Plan an outdoor picnic or barbeque if there is a nearby park. The meal can be catered or "do it yourself".

The feast will be more interesting if several of the above ideas can be used. No one should ever feel like they are being forced to eat with the group—

there are no such scriptural commands. But those planning the Feast should make the opportunity for group meals available and encourage others to participate.

4. Plan for Group Activities

Smaller groups will have more flexibility than larger groups (It may not be possible for 200 people to all go bowling together.) Exercise is certainly beneficial—especially when people are eating a lot. But the main purpose for group activities is for brethren to get to know one another. In many of these activities, some people will choose not to participate, but will watch (and talk to others):

- a. Swimming pool parties.
- b. Outdoor sports (volleyball, basketball, baseball, frisbee, etc.)
- c. Novelty Olympics—teams competing in a variety of unusual races and events.
- d. Nature hikes. (Children can run and explore while the older ones can talk.)
- e. Talent or “fun” show.
- f. Sing-along and/or board games. (The two go well together—people who do not like one usually like the other.)
- g. Bible quiz competition. (You may make up questions or use them from an existing Bible trivia game. Buzzer sets—devices that will determine which player presses his or her button first—cost **\$199 from Triple Q Questions, 618-949-3888**. (More expensive sets with more features are available from Groupics 757-424-4021, J/J Enterprises 580-622-5772, Quizmachine 800-294-0494 and Zeecraft 800-662-7475.)

Some activities are preferred by younger people, some by older. It is good to have a mixture of activities and it is good for people to learn to participate in activities that are often favored by other age groups.

5. Introduce Everyone on the First Day of the Feast

The first service of the 1997 Burr Oak Feast consisted of singing and a very short message, the rest of the time being devoted to each person (who wanted to) introducing themselves, telling something about their religious background, and saying what they

hoped to accomplish at the Feast that year. A very friendly person walked around carrying the microphone and helped by asking questions. About 100 people were present—most of whom did not know each other at the beginning of the Feast. From that point on, the Feast seemed like one big family—everyone knew who was there and why. Can this be made to work with a larger group? Yes, and a little technology might help. Try using a video camera and large-screen TV so that everyone can clearly see as well as hear.

6. Invite Everyone To a Planning Meeting the Evening After the First Day.

This allows people to make any contribution that the Eternal would have them make. It also helps to gain a consensus regarding any particular topics that are of interest that should be discussed at the feast. Teen-agers should not be left out in the planning. They are old enough to begin thinking about what the Eternal would have them learn from the Feast. With the guidance of a gifted adult, they should plan their schedule for the Feast (This worked quite effectively at Gatlinburg in 1998). This writer knows of several successful feasts where speaking and activity schedules were not finalized until after the Feast had begun. People seemed much happier because they had been a part of the Feast, not just arrived to be a spectator.

7. Studies and Messages Should All Be Interactive

Even if a person believes they have a message directly from the Eternal (a prophecy), the scripture teaches that the other believers should judge whether it is according to scripture (1Cor 14:29). How much more is there a need for evaluation if a man is simply giving his own opinion of the Scripture. If questions and comments are not permitted during a message, there should certainly be time allowed for them at the end.

The scripture commands an assembly only on the first and eighth day of the Feast. There is no command to have a “church service” every day of the Feast, though there is certainly nothing wrong with doing it. On the other hand, it may be helpful to have several different studies going at once

on some days and encourage people to attend the one most relevant to their personal needs. This was successfully done on one day at the Gatlinburg 1998 feast site.

8. Plan one event to which the general public is invited.

The Feast is a good time to gain experience in helping to reach out to others. Many people coming to a religious meeting for the first time want to hear and observe the new teaching without confrontation—they want to “blend into the crowd”. In most local Sabbatarian congregations, there is little crowd to blend into. But at the Feast there is a crowd. One event can be structured so that it will be of interest to both Feast attendees and others. If no new people attend, at least the Feast-goers will enjoy the event.

What kind of event should it be? It should be something that someone is gifted to present. It could be an explanation of the Feast of Tabernacles from the Bible, or a Bible lecture on some other topic that would attract attention. A Christian music program might work if the talents are available. A well-organized picnic/sporting event is also possible. Whatever type event is chosen, either a brief message explaining the Feast of tabernacles or literature item should be presented. It is important for others to understand that we teach the Bible as well as having a good time.

The event will need to be advertised in some way. A person who lives where the Feast is held might know the best way. Free advertising can often be obtained on a hotel or convention center bulletin board or their outdoor marquee. Newspapers and some radio stations may have a “community calendar” where they will give a brief promotion for free. Larger paid ads in newspapers will attract more attention, especially if they are run more than once, but this can be expensive. Pray and ask for understanding of the Eternal would have you do.

Happy Feast 1999!

These suggestions reflect conversations with many people. Nearly all of them have been tried at one or more sites. This is not intended to be an

Continued on back cover

Feast 1999 in Butler State Park, Kentucky

Houston & Dolly Holland, George & Pam Dewey, Norman & Marleen Edwards and other brethren will be hosting a Feast of Tabernacles site at Butler State Park, Kentucky. The principles expounded in the front page article of this issue will be applied at this Feast. We hope it will be an event that will be enjoyable as well as spiritually profitable to every member of the family.

Butler State Park is located a few miles off of I-71, half way between Cincinnati, Ohio and Louisville Kentucky. Immediately nearby is the Ohio river, which is the border between Kentucky and Indiana. The hall will hold about 300 people, and several other rooms will be available for smaller studies and get-togethers. The hall contains a big kitchen as well as dining tables—we may cook for ourselves or have meals catered for \$5.25 each. Facilities for many group activities are available at the park and in the surrounding area.

All of the details have not been worked out yet, but they will be printed in *Servants' News* as they are final-

ized. We realize that not everyone benefits from every activity, so we will attempt to arrange for a variety of them. Anyone wishing to help plan this Feast should contact *Servants' News* at their earliest convenience.

A variety of accommodations are available, both at the State Park and in motels a few miles away. All prices listed here include tax. The State Park offers lodge rooms at \$57.54 for double occupancy, 1-bedroom cottages with kitchens at \$79.81, and a few larger cottages with kitchens for \$91 to \$130 per night. Only a limited number of State Park rooms are available for the entire time of the Feast. (The Park already has many weekend reservations for Sept 24-25.) If you would like to assure yourself a state park room now, mention that you are with the "Feast of Tabernacles" when you make your reservation. The reservation number is **800-325-0078**.

There is ample additional lodging at four modern motels less than three miles away. Cost per room per night including tax is as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Days' Inn, 502-732-9301 | \$53.50 |
| Super 8 Motel, 502-732-0252 | \$53.50 |
| Hampton Inn, 502-732-0700 | \$60.00 |
| Holiday Inn, 502-732-6661 | \$57.87 |

If any extended family or other larger groups of 20-30 are interested in attending this Feast, a nearby camp has two heated lodges available for \$175 per night. One lodge sleeps 20, the other 30. Please contact *Servants' News* as soon as possible if you are interested.

Camping, including RV hookups, is available on a first-come, first-served basis at the State Park for \$12 per night. Since campgrounds are almost never full during the week, a site can virtually be assured by either arriving early Friday morning or asking someone else who is arriving early to reserve it for you.

We are also investigating other low-cost lodging in the area. We do not want anyone to miss the Feast if they want to come! We hope you will begin now to physically and spiritually prepare for your Feast of 1999! 

"How To Keep Feast" from page 29 exhaustive list or a "perfect Feast plan", but some **helpful suggestions** to those organizing Feasts and to those planning to attend them. We would welcome and probably publish letters with other constructive Feast suggestions.

This is the last feast before the year 2000. It may not be as easy to organize Feasts in years to come. We hope that everyone will start thinking about what they would like to accomplish at this coming Feast and where they would like to go. It is always helpful to Feast planners to know how many people they should plan for. In 1998, some non-aligned feast sites had many more people than they were planning for and others had a lot less. This caused some sites to be overcrowded, while others had empty space and spent much more on facilities than they needed to. We realize that some people cannot plan

very far in advance where they will go to the Feast, and others are still reacting to the overly controlling Feast attendance policies of other organizations. But if you were planning a Feast, you would want to know who is coming, so use the Golden Rule, and try to let Feast planners know where you plan to go as soon as you are relatively sure.

Start thinking about what you can spiritually contribute to a Feast next year. Happy Feast, 1999!

—Norman S. Edwards

Thank Him

Love the Lord,
Thank Him often.
With His guidance
All hardships soften.

—Lyle

Free Literature List

You may call, write, or send e-mail to obtain our free **Literature List**. It contains a complete list and index to all of our Basic Literature, Mature Literature, Study Resources and Information, and all back issues of *Servants' News*. All items are free. See contact information, below.

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many as want it at the lowest practical cost. The loose-leaf format used for *Servants' News* and most of our other literature is inexpensive and easy to copy (most literature is public domain). You might wish to hold the pages together with a 3-ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

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