



First or Last?

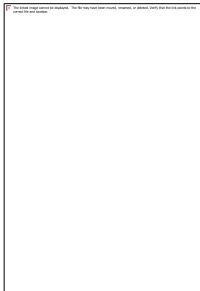
*Whatever thing you
do this day,
will it show God the way
you truly feel-that He is
real-the first above all
others?*

or

*Will He know by what you
show, that job and home
and you come first in
what you do-
and God is somewhere
down below
and last beneath
all others?*

Written by

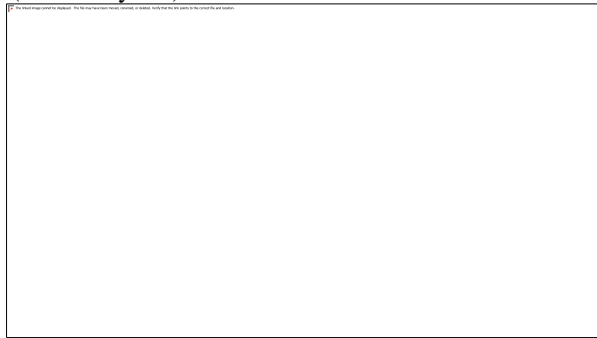
B.J. Minton



Fayetteville pastor turns 86 FRITTS 86-Members of CGI at Fayetteville toasted Carl Fritts August 9, 2000, on the occasion of his eighty-sixth birthday with cake, ice cream, and punch. An enjoyable time of fellowship followed a wonderful Sabbath service at the church.

'Christianity-Lite'

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1).



Bob Simmons lays hands on Mildred Cody for the receiving of the Holy Spirit during the Feast of Tabernacles in Myrtle Beach.

In memory of Bill Fowler

Two hundred sixty people celebrated Bill Fowler's life at his memorial service. The service was as Bill had wanted it—upbeat and positive—just as he lived each day of his life. There were a few happy tears, but there was more laughter than tears. Bill's brother Carl shared reminiscences of Bill's life, as did a longtime church member, and a man whose path first crossed Bill's in the fourth grade.

AOG gets new opening, closing; goes back to one-man format

TYLER, Texas- Depending on whether you are able to see the Armor of God television program, you may have noticed its new 30-second opening and closing segments.

Three ordinations in California

FRESNO, California—God's people enjoyed an especially exciting Day of Pentecost on June 11, 2000, at the Piccadilly Inn in Fresno, California. Mr. and Mrs. Dana and Noni McVey were ordained as deacon and deaconess in the Church of God International, and Mr. Dean Roberts was ordained an elder in the CGI ministry. Messrs. Charles Groce, Ben Chapman, and Loren

[Report and photo by
Norma Gobble]

Springfield pastor celebrates 80 years of life

SPRINGFIELD, Missouri-On September 7 the Springfield church held a surprise dinner for Mr. Register, our pastor. It was his eightieth birthday and he was presented with a new Bible to replace his Bible that was stolen while he was on a baptizing tour in Canada. All enjoyed the birthday cake and meal after singing "Happy Birthday" and wishing him many more years. Mr. Register is the pastor of the Springfield and Willow Springs congregations and is a member of the Ministerial Council. He was baptized in 1953 in Big Sandy, Texas, by Mr. Marion McNair.

Anita Phillips died on the night of October 5, 2000. The Tyler congregation misses this woman who truly held God first in her life. We look forward to seeing her in the resurrection.

Chamberlain officiated in the ceremony of ordination.

[Profiles of the Ministry: James Throgmorton](#)

POCAHONTAS, Arkansas” These days the 62-year-old CGI pastor from Arkansas is well known and respected in his hometown, but he will never be allowed to serve as the local Sunday school teacher. At least not again.

[Trumpets celebrated in Hickory; couple celebrates 59 years of marriage](#)

HICKORY, North Carolina” An invitation was given to the Summerville congregation of the Church of God International to join those in Hickory for the Feast of Trumpets (September 30).

[Choose the Tree of Life](#)

There are two diametrically opposed ways to live life, and they are symbolized in Genesis 3 by (1) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and (2) the tree of life. The former is the way of "get" and the latter is the way of "give." Which way do you choose to live?

[Board appoints CEO for CGI](#)

FAYETTEVILLE, Arkansas- In its September 17 meeting in Fayetteville, the Church of God International's Board of Directors, acting on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, appointed Mr. Charles Groce as executive vice president and CEO of the corporation.

[Knoxville celebrates first anniversary after reorganization](#)

KNOXVILLE, Tennessee” On the weekend of September 9 and 10 the local congregation, along with our pastor Mr. Orville Bumgardner and his wife Kitty, hosted the first anniversary of the re-formation of the local CGI congregation. The celebration was delayed by almost a month, as the first service was actually held on August 14, 1999.

[Remembering the Feast of Tabernacles 2000](#)

Memories from nine festival sites in five countries: United States, Australia, Canada, Jamaica, Philippines

[A word of thanks to festival children’s ministry leaders](#)

Church is a place for young people to come together, not just adults. The opportunity to worship the Lord is the same for both. In Psalm 8:1,2 it says: "O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of your enemies...."

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and would appreciate any [comments](#) you might have.

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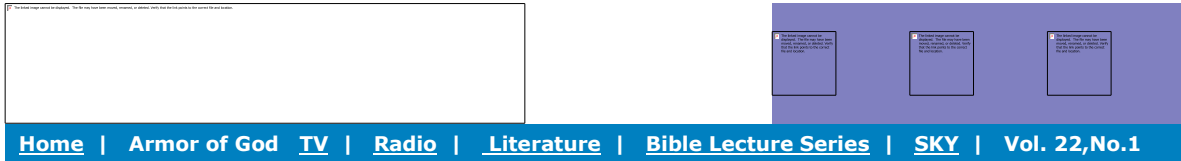
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AOG gets new opening, closing; goes back to one-man format

By Darren M. Cary

TYLER, Texas- Depending on whether you are able to see the Armor of God television program, you may have noticed its new 30-second opening and closing segments.

"I asked an employee of KETK if he could put together a concept on the side," said Mr. Bronson James, who oversees the television production. Mr. James wanted "to make the opening more friendly, more inviting, more inquisitive, and still utilize the established concept of what the program is, without using armor and the hardness of a suit of armor."

The former opening and closing segments included footage of a suit of armor that belonged to Garner Ted Armstrong, who, when the segments were shot in January of 1998, had recently disassociated himself from the Church of God International. The footage was used because it was readily available and it provided an adequate visual for the Armor of God theme. Mr. James said that, at the time, we needed a new opening immediately, "and that served us for a few years."

The new opening for the Armor of God television program, which he believes is "a more inviting, enlivening presentation," is much more technologically sophisticated than the first one. And, since the church claims the Bible as its sole authority and guide, the Bible itself, with computerized special effects, is used to portray the character of the program.

The Armor of God theme, however, is still the main emphasis in the opening segment. The new opening "helps establish the intent to provide the proper attire for the Christian according to what Paul wrote," explained Mr. James, referring to Ephesians 6:11-17.

He said the older one "was in some ways antiquated compared to the electronic presentations" of today,

which are the "fast-paced, attention-getting, layered, active devices used in television, such as FOX News, ESPN, these kinds of programs."

The new closing of the program is similar to the opening, and gives the new toll-free number, the mailing address, and the Web and e-mail addresses.

"We wanted to make certain all the avenues of access would be delineated, in addition to giving an imputation of appreciation for support if they [the viewers] are inclined to offer support," said Mr. James, adding that the policy of no solicitation in the program still remains.

"Overall," Mr. James summarized, "I feel it's a more professional and contemporary open and close for the program."

One-Man Format

The Armor of God telecast is testing the waters with another adjustment. The program's spokesmen have decided to once again try the one-man presentations.

When Armor of God began in 1998, each program featured a single "presenter." Charles Groce, Bronson James, Vance Stinson, and Bill Watson recorded one-man telecasts which were aired on a rotating basis.

Later that year the programs began to feature two and three presenters together for a more conversational tone, and have continued with this format since then.

But now it's going back to the single-anchor programs.

"We thought it was time to consider a one-man format for evaluation purposes," explained Bronson James. He wants to "take a look at what type of program gets a better response."

All of the program's speakers seem to favor this format, and for similar reasons. One reason is that the single-man format means less interruptions and a more consistent flow, which means more material can be covered.

"The two-person format is OK," admitted Bill Watson, "but it does slow down the presentation of the subject material. On the other hand, with a single-person format, the topic has a better chance of staying focused, and therefore should be easier to follow."

Also, Mr. Watson's opinion is that, with the multi-person format, "there is a tendency not to look into the camera," and that "it does occasionally come off a bit impersonal." He therefore believes that the newer programs will "perhaps allow us to 'bond' a bit more with the viewers."

Both Mr. James and Mr. Watson agree that these types of programs are easier to prepare.

They said that two-man programs will still be used, but less frequently. "Overall," said Mr. Watson, "I'm much more comfortable with a single-man format. If for no other reason than the content should have more substance."

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In memory of Bill Fowler

By Kathy Coleman

Two hundred sixty people celebrated Bill Fowler's life at his memorial service. The service was as Bill had wanted it—upbeat and positive—just as he lived each day of his life. There were a few happy tears, but there was more laughter than tears. Bill's brother Carl shared reminiscences of Bill's life, as did a longtime church member, and a man whose path first crossed Bill's in the fourth grade. Short messages were also given by two area Kansas ministers, as well as a minister from Tulsa, and Charles Groce from CGI. They all spoke of Bill's enthusiasm and zest for life, and how he loved people.

I know that Bill would have been overjoyed had those 260 people come together on a Sabbath while Bill was alive to worship with them! Folks came from various Churches of God. Some services were canceled by both United and independent congregations in order to allow attendance. It saddens me that we never managed to arrange joint church services while Bill was alive, but I'm glad brothers and sisters in Christ from different organizations, and from parts of Oklahoma, Missouri, and Texas, all attended Bill's memorial service.

I sang the song I also sang at the feast for Bill—"Behold How Good It Is" from Psalm 133 by Mark Graham. It went well—thanks to the upbeat service which didn't get me too choked up to sing—and thanks to God who helped me sing my very best to glorify Him, honor Bill Fowler, and give a message about unity. A favorite song of Bill's, "Hymn of Promise," was also sung by Suzanne Loomis and Kathy Monahan who had performed it previously at the feast especially for Bill.

My only regret is that I didn't wear my red dress. I thought about it, but chickened out and wore black. Several ladies did wear red, however, and it seemed right for the celebration that took

place. I think Bill would have applauded the red dresses!

The best part of the feast for me this year was seeing Bill Fowler there! He was above all a peacemaker, and was instrumental in bringing about the combined CGOM/CGI feast at beautiful Sequoyah State Park on Ft. Gibson Lake in Oklahoma. In his weakened condition, fighting an aggressive cancer, the trip to the feast taxed him, but he was overjoyed to be there visiting and participating. He used a wheelchair because he'd grown too weak to walk more than a few steps, but one warm afternoon a group pushed him in his chair out to the end of the peninsula on the lake and spent a couple hours visiting with him in that peaceful spot.

I don't know if Mr. Fowler's sermon was truly exceptional, or if the words he spoke simply carried extra meaning due to his condition. I do know he had everyone's attention. I do believe God blessed him with the strength to speak. Two men helped him up a couple stairs onto the stage, and helped him walk a few steps over to the table where he sat to give his sermon. He had to drink water and catch his breath before he could even begin speaking. I understand that another minister had a message prepared in case Mr. Fowler was only able to speak briefly, but he gave a full sermon, speaking powerfully after he got started.

He began with a favorite saying, "Today is a good day to have a GREAT day." He spoke of the reality of our lives, saying that all we can live right now is today. Yesterday is a canceled check; tomorrow is a promissory note; but today is cash that can be spent. We are now the sons of God (1 John 3:2) and as such we must make many important choices each day about how we live our lives.

One illustration Mr. Fowler used was the often-forwarded Internet story about the man with the wonderful attitude. When asked how he was, this man would always reply, "If I was any better I'd be twins." This man always made the choice to have the right attitude. When critically wounded and facing death, the paramedics looked at him as though he were already dead. He realized he needed to change their attitude toward him, and when they asked if he was allergic to anything, he replied, "Yes...bullets!" He then told them that he intended to live, and asked them to operate on him as though they expected him to live, too...and he did live.

Mr. Fowler seemed to be feeling well the day he gave his sermon and was able to attend the ministerial luncheon afterward, and the family dance that evening. But the next morning his wife Jo came to me, hugged me, and said they were going back home. I asked if she thought Bill had pushed too much in giving the sermon the day before and she said she didn't know, but she knew that he really wanted to do it, and she thought it might be the best one he had ever given.

Bill Fowler was a peacemaker. One of his favorite scriptures was Psalm 133 ("Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!..."). That was always a theme in his messages, and was also one for the feast this year. I had promised Mr. Fowler that if he was able to attend the feast, I would sing Mark Graham's song with those words (even though I'd never sung a solo at services at the feast before). Fortunately a brilliant accompanist made me sound good, and the song was well received. I also sang it at the memorial service.

How I pray that we all will dwell together in unity! I hope that all God's children are praying for His guidance and wisdom, and will then listen for His direction. Surely if we're all close to Him, letting Christ be in charge of His church, then we'll also be close to each other. We'll learn to dwell together now in the unity that we will surely experience when we see Bill Fowler again in God's Kingdom. This report was excerpted from two e-mails we received from Kathy Coleman, who attends the Salina, Kansas, church where Mr. Fowler preached once a month. We felt it was appropriate to reprint here, with permission.

Before his death, Bill Fowler was recredentialed as a CGI minister.

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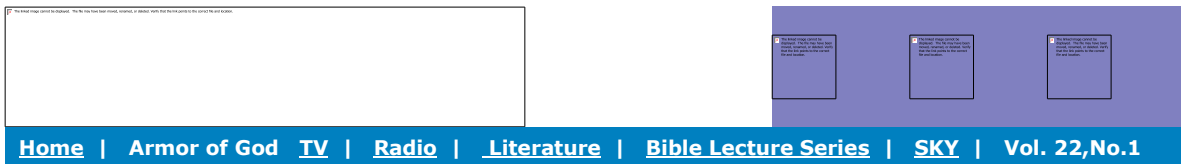
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Board appoints CEO for CGI

By Darren M. Cary

FAYETTEVILLE, Arkansas- In its September 17 meeting in Fayetteville, the Church of God International's Board of Directors, acting on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, appointed Mr. Charles Groce as executive vice president and CEO of the corporation.

The Board created the Executive Committee in 1995 as provided in the Constitution and Bylaws of the CGI. The Committee was to act in the place of a CEO and handle the day-to-day decisions implicit in the operation of the home office. That Committee is now dissolved.

"We felt that the corporation needed one head to be able to do business like other corporations do in the world," said Board member James Throgmorton of Pocahontas, Arkansas.

Mr. Throgmorton, who said Skip Martin initiated the thought of having a corporate CEO for the church, added, "A lot of us have talked about that over the years, to have one person 'where the buck stops here.'"

As executive vice president, Mr. Groce will be "working under the direction of the Board," said Mr. Throgmorton. The Executive Committee proposed its own dissolution to the Board. "That was a unanimous decision by Vance [Stinson], Benny [Sharp], and Charles [Groce]," Mr. Throgmorton said.

Vance Stinson related that he and Benny Sharp were at lunch together one day "and we both agreed that, since ideally corporations should have a CEO, it was time to dissolve the Executive Committee and appoint one."

Later they shared their discussion with Mr. Groce, who agreed with their conclusion.

"Charles did not participate in the decision" of who would be appointed executive vice president, explained Mr. Throgmorton. "He was very reluctant and really didn't want to accept the position. He did not seek the position. It's just that all the Board members, every one of us, acting on recommendation from the Committee, felt [that appointing a CEO] is what needed to be done...."

Mr. Throgmorton said that "the Board wouldn't have done anything if the Committee hadn't approached us," and that the appointment was "for the welfare of the church and the public image of the church."

Can a CEO of the CGI ever be empowered to change official church doctrine?

"Oh no, absolutely not," replied Vance Stinson. "That requires input from all the ministry, and the voice of the brethren will not be ignored either, should something like that come up."

When asked why the Executive Committee did not request the Board's appointment of a CEO earlier, Mr. Stinson answered, "We felt that, until the dust settled following the horrendous scandal the church had to endure, it was best to leave the Executive Committee in place, but it was realized from the early days of the post-scandal situation that in time it would be best to appoint a CEO."

The scandal, causing great controversy in 1995 and 1997, involved Garner Ted Armstrong, the church's CEO until his resignation from that position in 1995. He resigned from the church altogether in December of 1997.

Mr. Stinson continued, "Given the fact that we have a CEO [Charles Groce] who does not take a unilateral approach in making decisions and resolving difficulties, but instead is well-known for soliciting input from his peers, I believe that having a CEO is best for the church."

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Choose the Tree of Life

By Andrew Hall

There are two diametrically opposed ways to live life, and they are symbolized in Genesis 3 by (1) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and (2) the tree of life. The former is the way of "get" and the latter is the way of "give." Which way do you choose to live?

In this article we will explore these two opposite ways and how Jesus Christ will do away with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God told Adam, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16,17). God basically told man to obey Him by faith. He did not explain to man why it was wrong to eat of the first tree; He just told them not to. In other words, God was asking man to trust Him without knowing or seeing for themselves.

The devil, symbolized by the serpent (see Revelation 12), asked the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1).

Notice how Satan distorts what God said. Also notice that God told Adam this information before the creation of Eve. Thus, Eve probably had to rely on what Adam said God said, instead of hearing it straight from the mouth of God Himself.

The woman replied, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die'" (verses 2,3).

Did you catch it? Eve misquoted what God said by adding "nor shall you touch it." You can just see Satan cunning her by influencing her to just touch the fruit, and when she saw that this did no harm, she finally ate the fruit. It is of great importance that we accurately understand God's Word, lest Satan deceive us by our lack of knowledge! This is why many are deceived: they don't study on their own. They listen to their pastors and assume they are being told the truth.

Also notice that it is the "knowledge of good and evil" that God forbids. Satan would love to deceive everybody on every point, but he knows that this is impossible. Some of the knowledge that Satan gives is right. He does this on purpose to earn our trust so he can slip that lie in unsuspectingly. Believe me, Satan would love to deceive us on everything, but he knows we have strong points and weak points and he only attacks us on our weak link!

This is why we will be rulers during the thousand years. God has determined that we are of sufficient character to withstand the wiles of the devil that accompany our call. Those in the thousand years will only have to overcome self, not Satan or society. However, Satan will be let loose once more to test the inhibitions of the world.

Notice: "Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Revelation 20:7-9).

According to this, Satan is "bound" (verse 2) and is loosed once more. After the devil is cast

out for good (verse 10), the Great White Throne Judgment occurs. The tree of life will heal the nations (22:2). When Satan is banished, all the good that God wants for us will be brought to pass. Will you be among those who have chosen the tree of life?

Andrew Hall writes from Fresno, California. Scripture quotations were taken from the New King James Version.

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'Christianity-Lite'

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1).

By Lloyd W. Cary

These are days of the light, fast, easy things: days of hanging back, of non-involvement, of non-commitment, of (dare we say it?) lukewarmness. Today we see quick marriages, easy divorces, and ready abortions. We even have "lite" snacks, Bud Lite...and, unfortunately, "Christianity-Lite" and "Church-Lite"!

We are to be lights in the world (Matthew 5:14), but we are not to make "light" of our Christianity.

When we take our calling lightly, we are practicing, in effect, "Christianity-Lite"!

Recently my father died, and, as he lay dying, I was surrounded for three weeks by people I had not seen for years: relatives, old friends, church members, former members, and various ministers. For whatever reason, it seemed that I suddenly became fair game and a "lightning rod" for redress, correction, and evaluation. It became readily apparent that virtually all these well-meaning people had different sets of beliefs, although most professed to be "Christians."

I soon discovered that it is "OK" to profess Christianity...as long as you do not try to live it. If you live it, you are accused of "judging" the ones who do not. "We all worship God in our own way," it is excused, "so we must not judge one another." "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1) is quoted as a watershed for doing one's own thing with a clear conscience. Although it is true that we are not to condemn as to anyone's ultimate fate or their worthiness before God, we are, however, to discern, evaluate, and make determinations. First Corinthians 6:2,3 asks, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?" God's Word tells us right from wrong and it is incumbent upon His saints to obey Him.

The practice of justifying one's actions with a "Don't judge me!" attitude is what is referred to as "Christianity-Lite"-profession without commitment, belief without foundation, faith without works (James 2:20).

Following are a few of the many statements I heard at this time of duress. How would you answer them?

"There is no love in the Ten Commandments. I'll argue that with anybody. The Old Testament is replaced by the New Covenant. The law was nailed to the cross" (this by a minister).

"I do not believe all the Bible is inspired. I never proved it. I felt as though I were brainwashed" (this by an ex-member).

"Buddhism has led me to Christ. Everyone knows Christ traveled through the East and appropriated the tenants of Buddha as His own" (proclaimed by a relative).

"The reason they kept the Sabbath, holy days, and dietary laws is that they were Jewish. We are not Jewish!" (this by a gainsayer).

"He is in heaven now smiling down at us. We need to live for him now" (from a stranger).

"Christmas is OK. God understands. Why, we're not worshiping pagan gods. There is only one God; we all worship the same God no matter what you call Him" (spoken by a former member of God's church).

And finally, "The Feast of Tabernacles reestablished? Oh, God, I hope not!" (by a former member).

These statements are reproduced to arouse your awareness of a few of the attitudes that are extant. How would you have responded? Could you have answered these statements, and if not, why not?

Brethren, spiritually we are nearly alone out there! God's church is "graying." And unless we are able to pass the baton to a new, enthusiastic generation of Christians, we may be just one generation away from apostasy and darkness. When a man-a false prophet-appears and stands in the Holy Place,

proclaiming that he is God and encourages men to take his mark, his name, or the number of his name, millions will follow (Revelation 13:16-18)! How can you know you will not be deceived?

Second Thessalonians 2:2-4 warns us "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (cf. Revelation 17:16-18).

Christian, are you scripturally prepared to respond to questions like these, to answer those who may sincerely ask you? And to stop the mouths of skeptics and gainsayers at a moment's notice (Titus 1:9)? If not, why not?

First Peter 3:15 encourages us to "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

We do not need Christianity-Lite or Church-Lite today! More than ever, we need "Christianity-Heavy," "Christianity-Substantial," with heartfelt church commitment. We must constantly stretch toward spiritual maturity-not maintain spiritual infancy (2 Peter 3:18).

While more and more in these last days are becoming mere Bible professors, God's people are to be Bible believers-and doers of the Word. Christ said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Again, He said, "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7). It is not up to mankind to define sin. God's Word tells us what sin is-"the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4)-it is up to us whether we will obey or disobey.

Could you prove to a trinitarian from the Bible that God is not a trinity? (Send for our free booklet, Who, What, Is God?)

Can you explain from the Scriptures that we do not go to heaven when we die, and show the true state of the dead? (Send for our free booklet, Immortality-God's Gift to the Saints.)

Can you show that we are not "born again" now? (Send for our free booklet, Born From Above-or Born Again?)

Are you able to go through your Bible from beginning to end and show that God's people are to keep God's Sabbath and holy days? (Send for Sunday, Saturday-What Difference Does It Make?)

If not, why not?

Can you explain these things, and others, from your own Bible, or do you feel you may be stepping onto a spiritual land mine? Beware! Until you know a thing well enough that you can teach it to others, you do not know it well enough yourself (Hebrews 5:12)! We desperately need to get back to the basics (Jude 3)!

Too often we become so "familiar" with the basics that we become "bored" with them and our ears itch for some new thing (2 Timothy 4:3). Too many have thought that they knew the basics well enough to "dabble" in strange doctrines with immunity and found out the hard way that they did not know them nearly as well as they thought they did. (In this vein, study Matthew 24:4,24; Acts 20:30; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:1; and Hebrews 13:9). We need to prove-and reprove-what we

think we know (1 Thessalonians 5:21)!

The doctrine of a progressive revelation after the apostles is not found in the New Testament. We are to defend the faith once delivered with all the strength we can muster, both by true doctrine and good example of life. Second John 10 warns us, "If there come any unto you"-whether it be a friend, gainsayer, minister, or "an angel from heaven" (Galatians 1:8)-"and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house"-into your mind-"neither bid him God speed." In other words, you do not even need to be politically correct or polite about it. A simple "Get thee hence!" will do (Matthew 4:10). Far too many Christian soldiers have fallen because they did not heed this plain and simple admonition!

Christ said, in Luke 18:8, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Think. Why would He have asked that if there were not some possibility of it coming to pass?

Let us return to the basics. Get back into the Word of God; back into our church literature that expounds it; back into true Christian fellowship. We need to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11) and fight the good fight. We need to know and know that we know! (Be sure to send for our free booklet, How to Study Your Bible, to get started or to renew your commitment.)

We need "Christianity-Substantial" in these last days-weighty, unwavering, and intense. We need committed Bible reading, Bible study, prayer, and meditation-not Laodicean "Christianity-Lite" (Revelation 3:16)! Matthew 6:33 exhorts us, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." There is nothing more awesome or important than your own salvation. We are encouraged in Philippians 2:12 to "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). When-not if-satanic attack comes in any of its many disguised forms, will you be found wearing the whole armor of God? Or will you become another spiritual casualty?

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40). When the King of Glory comes again, will you be practicing "Christianity-Lite," or will you be ready?

All Scripture quotations were taken from the King James Version. This article is adapted from a sermonette delivered by the writer at this year's Feast of Tabernacles in Land Between the Lakes, Kentucky.

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Profiles

of the Ministry:

James Throgmorton

POCAHONTAS, Arkansas” These days the 62-year-old CGI pastor from Arkansas is well known and respected in his hometown, but he will never be allowed to serve as the local Sunday school teacher. At least not again.

In the mid-1960s, James Ephraim Throgmorton joined the Methodist church where he eventually became a board member.

"That was the church you wanted to be in to be a successful business member," he explained.

Because of his previous experience working with young people, Mr. Throgmorton began teaching senior-high Sunday school.

He was doing well, but then something happened. Mr. Throgmorton’s belief system began to drastically shift away from traditional Christian understanding, and it affected his teaching style.

"I threw away all the Methodist literature, bought Bibles for all the kids, and started teaching," he said. He began "teaching the Sabbath, [the truth about] heaven, hell, immortality of the soul, pagan holidays (what really got me in trouble), the Second Coming, Kingdom of God”all the things you would hear on the [World Tomorrow] TV program."

As a result some kids went home and challenged their parents about why they kept Christmas.

"It started a furor in the city of Pocahontas. It made everybody very angry," he recalled.

One of his Sunday school students became a member of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), and eventually graduated from Ambassador College and became a minister. "Before he went to Ambassador he was one of the nicest kids," Mr. Throgmorton said. Afterward the young man acquired what Mr. Throgmorton calls "Ambassador arrogance."

"As far as I know he’s still a Worldwide minister." Mr. Throgmorton came across a recent article in The Journal reporting on an Easter sunrise service attended by the minister and Joseph Tkach.

Conversion

James Throgmorton's conversion, like many others, was not simply the result of watching a television program. Life's various experiences and circumstances led to his current convictions.

"My grandfather had listened to Herbert Armstrong all the way back when he was in Eugene, Oregon," explained Mr. Throgmorton. "He gave me and my dad a copy of the old United States and British Commonwealth when I was about 12 years old. It profoundly affected the way I looked at God."

His father and grandfather were "avid Bible students and really knew the Bible well," but, according to Mr. Throgmorton, there were many things they just didn't understand.

James went on through high school and was interested in the sciences, particularly astronomy and astrophysics. Then in 1958 he joined the army.

In the army he repaired and maintained cameras, projectors, and instrumentation. "That's what I'd always been interested in as a kid," he said, noting that he had done a lot of photography work in his youth.

Stationed in Canada, James Throgmorton became "intensely interested" in the Boy Scouts organization. He said that it "changed my interests and what my priorities were," "changed my goals in life," and "got me to thinking on a more serious mode than most 19-year-olds." He no longer wanted to be an astrophysicist (although today he owns three or four research-quality telescopes).

"I was so committed to Scouting that, when I came back to Pocahontas after I was discharged from the army, I wanted to stay here and work in Scouting," he said.

In 1960 a factory hired him for a few photography jobs. "That showed me there was a market, that I could make a living with skills I already had," he said.

So that year, at 22 years of age, he opened his photography business.

"I was the youngest business operator in Pocahontas," claims Mr. Throgmorton. "Now there's only three business operators still operating their business that has more tenure. I'm fourth."

He worked with the Boy Scouts while he ran his business, which gave him plenty of freedom. "I'd just close up my business and take off a week at a time to take the kids to Scout camp or whatever," he said. In the mid-60s, said Mr. Throgmorton, "I started looking at other religions." When he went to different churches to shoot weddings, he would pick up their literature to check them out.

"Personal things happened that made me pick up the Bible a little differently than I had, and I began to understand what I read. About this time I came across the World Tomorrow program and I remembered the little booklet my grandfather gave me and my dad, and I really started looking at the Bible seriously," he said.

"The World Tomorrow program was the only one that squared with what I found in the Bible." One day, over ten years after his grandfather's death, Mr. Throgmorton was in his grandmother's house when he "came across a box of coworker letters—they were hand-addressed by Loma Armstrong," and he studied them.

"I understood Herbert Armstrong's salesmanship. I read all the letters from the early 40s when we always had seven more years," he said. "It was always seven more years." In the 40s it was the same story."

Mr. Throgmorton said he is "not an end-time religion freak" because of all those letters. He said the alarmist approach was "a weakness there in Herbert Armstrong," though Mr. Throgmorton does believe in the basic prophetic tenants Mr. Armstrong taught. "When I looked around I found the Worldwide Church of God the only one close to what I found in the Bible." He said his new insights about God and the Bible came during a time of financial prosperity, when he "was cocky and arrogant and proud." He believes God caused some things to happen that put him back in his place.

In the WCG Mr. Throgmorton became good friends with his local pastor and others who served in ministerial positions. While he was not ordained in the WCG, Mr. Throgmorton found favor with the pastor, and was included in deacons and elders meetings.

Then Comes Marriage

"Cindy had understood the truth when she was about 15 years old. Her family moved to Arkansas to get her away from the truth," says Mr. Throgmorton.

Her parents were violently opposed to her association with the church, but at age 17 she was able to attend services in Arkansas. It so happened that the congregation was nearer to her new home than the WCG group in Indiana was to her old home.

Cindy's parents threw away her collection of church literature, so she visited the church library. Mr. Throgmorton was the church librarian. Mr. Throgmorton said Cindy Funchess was different from the other girls because of her obvious conviction of the truth. She took her beliefs seriously. James and Cindy met January 13, 1973, and were married March 24, 1974. They have two daughters: Elise, 19, and Mandi, 21.

Exit WCG, Enter CGI

One main reason Mr. Throgmorton decided to leave the fellowship of the WCG was alleged "financial shenanigans" at the Pasadena headquarters. He was also concerned about certain things being said about Mr. Armstrong's son, Garner Ted. The last straw came when his minister told him privately, "I know that the letters coming from Pasadena are lies and satanic, but as long as they pay my salary I will get up and read them." Mr. Throgmorton went back to that church maybe one more time, and then within two or three months the CGI came along. He was in Jeckyll Island at the first CGI feast in 1978.

In February of 1979 he was ordained a deacon by Mr. Ted Phillips. Cindy was ordained a deaconess that same day. At 24 years old, he said, "she may well be the youngest deaconess ever ordained into the church." Mr. Throgmorton was ordained an elder on September 25, 1980, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, in Jeckyll Island. He became a member of the Ministerial Council on January 9, 1986, and 10 years later to the day he was put on the Board of Directors.

He is also a regional director for the South-central region of the United States, from the Carolinas to Oklahoma, and visits the congregations of Memphis, Little Rock, Poplar Bluff, and Pochontas. In the past he has overseen "as many as seven or eight" congregations. When he is not too busy with his successful photography business, and when he is not serving brethren elsewhere, please be sure to thank Mr. Throgmorton for all his dedicated and faithful work, and for his strong convictions of CGI doctrine. You can be confident that he won't be moonlighting as a Sunday school teacher.

Darren M. Cary

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Three ordinations in California

By Loren Chamberlain

FRESNO, California—God's people enjoyed an especially exciting Day of Pentecost on June 11, 2000, at the Piccadilly Inn in Fresno, California. Mr. and Mrs. Dana and Noni McVey were ordained as deacon and deaconess in the Church of God International, and Mr. Dean Roberts was ordained an elder in the CGI ministry. Messrs. Charles Groce, Ben Chapman, and Loren Chamberlain officiated in the ceremony of ordination.

Dana McVey

Dana McVey grew up in Downey, California, and has two brothers and one sister. Dana was baptized in 1972. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Ornamental Horticulture from the State of California Polytechnic University, Pomona, in 1976. Dana married Noni Chamberlain, the daughter of Loren and Paddy Chamberlain, in Pacific Grove on March 5, 1977, the same year he began his own landscape business, California Peppertree, on the Monterey Peninsula. He has recently started a second business called Dot Digital. This is a business that designs and maintains Web sites. His youngest daughter, Jordana, is an important part of this business. She has assisted her dad on the design of many

of the sites they have been hired to do.

Dana was also instrumental in creating the Web page for the Church of God International, and is the Web master with the responsibility of maintaining it. He has made numerous appearances in CGI meetings to explain the operation of the Internet and the church's Web page in particular.

From the time Dana moved to the Monterey Peninsula, he has been very supportive of the church, traveling with his family from one church area to another. Over the years he has been involved in every aspect of service at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Even though he is very busy with family and church, Dana does occasionally find time for scuba diving and kayaking.

Noni McVey

Noni McVey spent the first twelve years of her life in Phoenix, Arizona, where she was born. In 1968 her entire family moved to San Jose, California. At the present time her older brother Roger Chamberlain resides in Glendale, Arizona, and her younger brother Brit resides in Peoria, Arizona.

Noni was baptized in 1975 in Pasadena while attending Ambassador College for two years. She returned home to live with her parents who had recently moved to Pacific Grove, California. At this time she began working as a legal secretary for an attorney in Carmel, California.

In 1977 Noni married Dana McVey, and two years later she made the decision to leave her job to devote herself to being a "career mother."

In 1980 she gave birth to her first daughter, Elizabeth. Elizabeth is currently in her last year of college at San Diego State University, California, where she is working toward her teaching credential.

In 1983 Noni was blessed with a second daughter, Jordana. Jordana currently is attending Carmel High School as a senior. Jordana maintains the Sabbath-Keeping Youth (SKY) Web page for the church.

Noni's top priority is spending time with her family, and this is what she enjoys most. In addition to her family she enjoys gardening and reading. Noni has said many times, "In today's world you must be involved in your children's schools." Noni has been president of the PTA five times over the last fifteen years. She is known as a professional volunteer, who besides being very active in school programs, was vice president of membership for the National Charity League, and also an Ombudsman.

Noni has been featured on two editions of the Armor of God television program, and has coauthored a booklet on child training. Noni established the Sabbath School Curriculum, and has written many Bible school lessons for the children of the Church of God International. Presently she holds the position of Director of Youth Services and Education for the Church of God International.

Dean Roberts

Dean Roberts was born in Salinas, California, in 1949, after which the family moved to nearby Hollister. He graduated from high school in 1967. He continued his education at Hartnell College and graduated with an AA degree in Business Administration. His education was further broadened by eight years in the US Air Force from 1970 to 1978.

Dean presently works for a ready-mix concrete company driving a pneumatic set. He has always enjoyed driving big rigs professionally and has done so since 1985. He was bitten by the driving bug at the early age of 16 and has been driving ever since.

Other outside interests revolve around cars. Dean says that, at age 2, "I lived way out in the country. I was playing with one of my cars and I took my car out to the end of the driveway and put my car on the highway. A friendly trucker saw me and walked me back to the house where I got my hide tanned. I started building models as a teenager and from there have worked on cars ever since, including a two-year stint as crewman on an IMCA modified. I am now watching my son Matt follow my footsteps."

Dean gives his mother credit for creating an interest in him for God's work. He didn't follow any program but listened to and followed his mother's advice during his teenage years.

In July of 1974 Dean began attending with the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) and was baptized in 1974. On Atonement in 1979 his conscience prompted him to leave the WCG and he began supporting the Biblical Church of God (BCG). He served as music leader and gave sermonettes when called upon. He also helped with the Feast of Tabernacles, performing site searches, planning, and negotiations, and he did magazine bulk mailing and tape reproduction.

Again, mixed signals from the leadership of the BCG caused Dean to begin serving and supporting the CGI. Since 1985, Dean, along with his wife Helen, has served and supported the church in a number of ways. Dean serves in both the Selma and Monterey Peninsula churches as music leader, and he gives sermons and sermonettes. Over the past 15 years he has shared responsibilities with Loren Chamberlain at the Feast of Tabernacles, wearing many hats.

Dean has been blessed with a wonderful wife, Helen. It is a wonderful marriage of some 22 years, and still growing strong. Helen has been a member of the Church of God since 1963. For many years Helen prepared the artwork and pictures for the Sabbath school at the feast, and participated in teaching the children. They set the example of what a strong husband-and-wife team can accomplish working together.

They also have the blessing of three grown children. Carissa, the oldest daughter, was recently married in the church to Craig Smith. Both were baptized on the same day. They presently reside in Missouri where Craig's company transferred him. Their home church misses them. Their son Matt recently graduated from high school and is working at Sears. Vicki is a senior in high school and is an accomplished artist.

A small church group tends to grow into a very close-knit family group. Dean, Helen, and their children appreciate this blessing of having friends, a family, and mentors.

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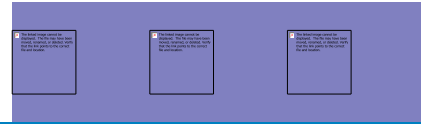
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A word of thanks to festival childrenâ€™s ministry leaders

By Noni McVey

Church is a place for young people to come together, not just adults. The opportunity to worship the Lord is the same for both. In Psalm 8:1,2 it says: "O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of your enemies...."

The goal of worship is to draw closer to God and Jesus Christ. This past Feast of Tabernacles we provided our children with the opportunity to experience a closeness to God through worship services on their level. The theme for Sabbath school was "A Reflection of Jesus." Through a series of nine lessons our young people were taught about the physical Tabernacle from the past and Jesus Christ in the present, who tabernacles within them. Our leaders at each site went above and beyond what was expected.

Serving as a childrenâ€™s ministry leader at the Feast of Tabernacles can be both one of the most rewarding and stressful experiences of oneâ€™s life. It is rewarding to see God use oneâ€™s efforts to help children get to know God. The fruit of oneâ€™s labor is seen on that last day of the feast. It is when all the children recite their memory verses and answer the biblical questions correctly; when art projects are on display for the entire congregation to see; and when the special music is beautifully sung. It can also be stressful because there are unexpected problems such as an art project that did not go just as planned, having prepared for 10 children and 25 have arrived, or vice versa. Even though the stresses and demands were at different levels for all of our leaders at the feast, the joy and satisfaction they received from doing the job was exhilarating.

I hope all of you who attended a Church of God International feast site had the opportunity to see our childrenâ€™s ministry at work. I hope that each parent and church member thanked those who sacrificed their time to give to our children. The Church of God International had nine feast sites. At each site where children were in attendance, there was a childrenâ€™s program. A total of 15 leaders served in our ministry for our children this year. I would like to say to each of these leaders, Thank you. Each and every one of you did an incredible job.

Those who led our children at the feast this year had a wonderful opportunity to help change lives. If you would like to join this childrenâ€™s ministry team, I would like to hear from you. Hereâ€™s how you can connect with me. You may write: Noni McVey, PO Box 223675, Carmel, CA 93922; email: noni@cgi.org; or call: (831) 625-0231. Be sure to visit us on our Web site at www.cgi.org/sky.

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