



## Florida churches host guest speaker

*By Pamela Barnes*

### **AUBURNDALE, Florida-**

The Sabbath service of June 30 was a special event for the Auburndale church. Along with having a joint service with the neighboring Clearwater church, we also had a guest speaker, Mr. Bob Swimm. Services began with songs directed by Ray Wendle with accompaniment by Angie Wendle.

Robert Balsamo of the Clearwater congregation gave the sermonette entitled "Building Our Spiritual Health." Topics included prayer, fasting, and growing closer to God each day. After the sermonette, we enjoyed an excellent sermon from Bob Swimm. Mr. Swimm's sermon dealt with the apostle John's Gospel and the seven miracles Jesus performed in this book of the Bible. Mr. Swimm looked at each miracle separately and asked if these events related to our seven holy days. It was a very thought-provoking sermon enjoyed by all.

After the sermon, the two congregations enjoyed a light lunch and much

## [All Things Are Ready- Come to the Feast](#)

A football play book and a wedding invitation. This is surely a strange pairing, an unlikely combination; what could they possibly have in common? At first glance you might think absolutely nothing, but let's see. Every organized football team has a play book. The play book, depending on the skill and expertise of the head coach and his staff, outlines every possible offensive and defensive play allowed by the rules of the game. If the coach is innovative, it contains several trick or gadget plays. Once, I watched as Don Shula of the Miami Dolphins totally bamboozled my hometown Bengals with an on-sides punt, a play I had never seen before or have since.

## [America's Greatest Sin: Idolatry](#)

If you were to speculate on what is America's greatest sin, what would it be? Would it be dancing, drinking, and honky-tonking-or something so close and incredibly insidious that none would ever suspect it?

## [A Brief Study on Women and Eldership](#)

Editor's Note: The following study paper was written in the early 1990s, but has never been published-until now. The author cautions that, while the overall conclusion of this study accurately represents the position of the Church of God International, it is only a study paper and is not necessarily the "final word" on all the issues addressed herein.

## [Sacrificing Our Lives](#)

Not too long ago a thought crossed my mind and it made me shudder. How would I respond if God came to me and told me that every person I knew and loved would be saved if I would be willing to lose my life eternally? For some reason, that thought seemed so real that it almost made me sick. I'm talking about real death here, eternal death. No chance that somehow God would change His mind.

## [Toronto CGI holds 'CDC' classes](#)

**TORONTO, Ontario, Canada-**The Toronto congregation of the Church of God International has just concluded its first Christian Development Classes (CDC), which were fulfilling and enriching successes for several reasons.

## [Marangs travel to Kansas, Iowa, and Canada](#)

On May 12, 2001, thirty-seven brethren of the Wichita church enjoyed

fellowship. Our congregations look forward to ministerial visits as an opportunity to meet together with larger fellowships.

## Frittses celebrate birthday and anniversary

*By Norma*

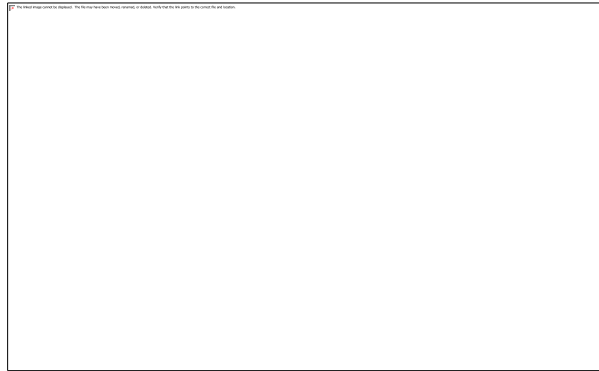
**GobbleFAYETTEVILLE, Arkansas**-The CGI congregation of Fayetteville honored Carl and Christina Fritts with a celebration of Christina's birthday and the couple's sixty-third wedding anniversary.

Christina was 84 on May 22. Carl and Christina were married on June 20, 1938, in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Their anniversary cake featured a cake icing version of their entire wedding party. Congratulations to this beloved couple who are an inspiration to all who know them.

having Bronson James give the Bible study before services. He also sang for special music and gave the sermon. Afterward many people enjoyed refreshments and visiting with him.

## [Scenes from the CGI's new home office facilities](#)



The atrium is at the heart of the new facility, and makes for a lovely view from all around the office.

[Television and Radio Log](#) || [Armor of God Literature](#) || [Statement of Beliefs](#) || [Bible Lecture Series](#)  
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## America's Greatest Sin: Idolatry

If you were to speculate on what is America's greatest sin, what would it be? Would it be dancing, drinking, and honky-tonking-or something so close and incredibly insidious that none would ever suspect it?

*By Lloyd W. Cary*

In the beginning, when God created man, He instilled within the mind of man several driving forces including self-preservation, procreation, curiosity, and the desire to worship something greater than himself. If man does not know the true God, he tends to make gods of his own-in his own image. A study of history and your Bible shows this proclivity of creating gods to worship is as old as man himself.

Satan is in tune with the human mind and has exploited man's desire to worship a being or supernatural force greater than himself. It has always been Satan's desire to be worshiped, bowed down to, and treated as a god. For 6,000 years God has allowed Satan to be the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). This is called idolatry.

Idolatry is a religious worship of a false or nonexistent god-that is, heathen worship. It is a placing of anything between you and the true God. Thousands of years ago, God made unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would grow great and inherit great blessings. But in the end they turned to idolatry and went into captivity.

The United States and British peoples have come into power and fortune as no other nation in all history. We have every conceivable blessing: blessings of the womb, of weather, of mineral resources, of crops, of wealth, of military might, and every convenience. And yet we seem to be bringing more and more curses upon our heads.

Why? Why crime, murder, rape, drugs, turbulent weather, and broken, unhappy homes? We see children murdering children in our schools. We are murdering our unborn babies by the millions.

Ahhh, but we are a Christian nation, aren't we? I submit to you that, more and more, we are reaping curses and not blessings (Leviticus 26). Are we following the same courses as

our forefathers?

Jesus was asked in Matthew 22:36-38, "Master, which is the great commandment in the Law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

This goes together with Exodus 20:3-8: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Which of the Commandments have we, as a nation, not broken? Which of God's Ten Commandments do we not, as a nation, daily grind into the dust? We have placed other things and ourselves before our God. We are committing the sin of national idolatry!

The ancient Egyptians believed in the immortality of the soul and life after death. Their religion had many objects of worship including crosses, steeples (obelisks), trees, and idols-and many of their customs remain with us to this day. (Reread *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop to refresh your memory of these things.) The religion of Egypt deified animals, insects, and reptiles, including dogs, cats, frogs, flies, cattle, gnats, bugs, and beetles, as well as certain deified people such as Pharaoh himself. They worshiped the sun, moon, wind, and stars via astrology. Their chief god, Horis, and the goddess, Isis, were but recreated names for Nimrod and Semiramis (Astarte, Ishtar, or Easter today). If we had asked those living in those societies about the validity of their beliefs, they would have assured us that they were "A-OK." They believed like everyone else around them, and "surely all these people could not be wrong"...could they? Is the majority always right?

Unknown to professing Christianity today, our nation, as well as many other nations around the world, has adopted many of the pagan customs and idols of ancient Egypt and Babylon, Greece, and Rome. If one has an eye to see, they are everywhere. Why, we even see resemblances in comic books: Superman, the Flash, the Hulk, Wonder Woman, and so forth, where human characters take on some of the same magic, mystical, or super powers that were attributed to many of the pagan gods of long ago.

What is a true Christian?

What, then, is the Bible definition (not Webster's) of a Christian? Read and memorize Romans 8:9: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His [that is, he is not a Bible-defined Christian]." Therefore, a Christian is one who has the Holy Spirit and belongs to Christ.

To whom does He give His Spirit? Read and memorize Acts 5:32: "And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, which God hath given to them that obey Him." We see a stern warning in Revelation 18:4, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." The White Horse of Revelation 6:2 is identified in Matthew 24:5 as being false religion and false Christs.

## America's greatest sin

The national sin of America today is the same as that of ancient Israel; that of idolatry. And the idol of America is and consists of false Christianity! But aren't we a Christian nation? Read on.

In Matthew 24:5 Jesus prophesied, "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." The use of the Greek word *polus* used here actually means "most." "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24).

The "Christian" religion of the world, as most people observe it, is one that has appropriated the name of Jesus Christ to give it legitimacy. We are commanded to "judge righteous judgement" (John 7:24). This means we are to make discernments. Jesus said we will know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:20). Many see great evangelistic works today on TV and assume they must be blessed of God. But growth, numbers, and TV stations are not the true measure of God's blessings. The devil can also inspire growth, numbers, and outlets for his "ministries"! How can we know who blessed a particular church? Again, Christ answered, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." That means by what they teach, what they say, what they do-how they live. Check up on their doctrines. Speaking of Christ, Mark's Gospel says, "And they were astonished at His doctrine" (Mark 1:22), or teaching, because He did not speak and teach and live like those around Him.

## Does doctrine make a difference?

Let's be honest. Do the typical Sunday-morning preachers teach the truth of God from the Bible, or do they teach the commonly believed errors of heaven, hell, the immortality of the soul, the trinity, Sunday, Christmas, New Year's, Valentine's Day, Easter, and Halowe'en? Do they teach God's holy days correctly, if at all? Do they understand and teach correctly about the Godhead, if at all? Do they properly teach church government? Do they teach the ultimate destiny of man-that he is to be born again by metabolic change into the very Kingdom of God? Do they teach biblical prophecy accurately, or do they place their various denominational twists upon it? Do they correctly teach the resurrections as outlined in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, or do they substitute one of the various secret rapture theories? What about God's plan of salvation? Do they know, understand, and teach God's seven-step plan of salvation as revealed through His annual holy days (Leviticus 23), or do they exchange it for "just giving your heart to the Lord" at an emotionally charged assemblage in an auditorium or football stadium? Do they teach that God's laws ought to be obeyed today, or that they were "nailed to the cross"?

In view of these things, what do they have doctrinally correct? What do they teach? What is their proof? Do they teach God's truth, God's doctrines, God's laws-or Satan's lies? By their overall fruits shall you know them, not just by their kindly words and generous deeds! Yes, we shall know them by what they say, teach, and do!

We see in Revelation 12:9, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world, except those calling themselves 'Christians,' or except those in the United States of America." It that what it says? No! Read these precious words in your own Bible! It says Satan the devil has the whole world deceived. Do you believe this? Or do you prefer to go along with the majority? Many, thinking they are doing the right thing, actually find themselves dabbling in doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1).

### Enter in at the strait gate

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:13,14).

How many?

"Few."

Christ said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

The vast majority of those claiming to follow Christ today worship a Christ who never lived! Indeed, they worship a "Christ" who never walked the face of this earth!

Again, let's be brutally honest. Most professing Christians today do not know what Christ looked like then, or what He looks like today (Revelation 1:13-16), when He was born, when He died, or how.

Â· Most worship a Good Friday-Easter Sunday god and mistakenly call it three days and three nights (72 hours), thus denying the only sign that Christ gave that He was indeed the Messiah (Matthew 16:4).

Â· Many worship a god who supposedly did away with His own law. And yet Christ plainly said in Matthew 5:17, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

Â· The majority worship a three-in-one trinitarian god, which becomes a mockery when we think of God making man in His own image (Genesis 1:27). Such a godhead is exclusively closed and cannot be entered into by the begotten sons of God.

Â· They worship a god who is represented by Sun-day worship, crosses, steeples, colored bunny eggs, burning candles, holy statues, holy water, holy saints, and pagan holidays and many such things.

Â· All these things are an integral part of their worship, yet have little or nothing to do

with the God of your Bible.

Â· Those who persist in this idolatrous form of worship will not be in the First Resurrection. So says your Bible! "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Revelation 22:15). God says, "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jeremiah 10:2), and yet many see no harm in going against God's commands.

Many falsely worship a god who is surrounded in a mythological heaven operating a kind of "soul factory." As most would see it, God is surrounded by innumerable sweet, innocent, immortal "souls" which He stuffs into human bodies on the earth, and if they live good, righteous lives, He may accept them back into His heavenly realm at the end of their journey. Or, if they do wickedly, He may send them down into an ever-burning eternal hell to roast, pop, and sizzle for all eternity.

And yet, if the Bible is to be our criteria-if God means what He says and says what He means-it seems He must be obliged to send most of these immortal souls to an ever-burning hell because they were unfortunate enough to be born in a part of the world where they have never heard the only name under heaven by which men might be saved (Acts 4:12).

Many quote John 3:16, but totally ignore what is said just three verses before where it plainly says, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). Does all this make sense to you? Could you be happy in heaven, praising God, while your relatives and loved ones are in the darkest pits of hell and torment, screaming their eternal lives away? Is this the loving God of your Bible? We submit to you that it is not. We invite you to send for our free booklets, Hell, You Say? and Immortality-God's Gift to the Saints. Could you be deceived?

The apostle Paul tells us, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers [yes, he has ministers-many more than God has at this point in time] also be transformed as [resembling] the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:14,15).

Satan the devil masquerades and presents himself to many as their god. Jesus Christ was not the sick, effeminate, sad-eyed apparition in white robes with a halo over His head as many works of art depict Him. Our Lord and Savior was all man and a yard wide! What could be more cunning and diabolical than for Satan to deceive men into worshiping his own image, disguised as Christ? He often masquerades in a false "Christian garb" and has deceived men into worshiping him on his day, the first day of the week, which we call Sun-day. Send for our free publication, Saturday, Sunday-What Difference Does It Make??

God defines His annual holy days in Leviticus 23. These festivals are God's holy days, not Jewish holy days. God's holy days are pregnant with deep spiritual meaning and insight,

yet most worldly churches completely ignore them, labeling them as "Jewish." In Exodus 31:13, God plainly says that these sabbaths (weekly as well as annual sabbaths) are a sign between Him and His people. "Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you."

Without this sign, you are simply not identified in the Bible as one of God's chosen ones. The sin of America is the national sin of idolatry. False Christianity-following a form of religion in the guise of Christianity-is a curse to our nation, not a blessing! Counterfeit Christianity obfuscates real Christianity. The evil of it is that once men have accepted the satanic counterfeit, they no longer see any need to seek out the true God of your Bible. They become ensnared in their comfort zone instead of seeking correction and instruction in righteousness through the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). We have strayed far from our God. Oh, how blessed we would be if only we would follow our God!

"But there are good people out there!"

Are we "trashing" all those churches and the people in them? By no means! We are simply comparing commonly believed doctrines with the Bible. Make no mistake! There are many good, kind, caring, loving, sincere, and well-meaning people out there. There are! But that does not make them a Bible-defined Christian. Truth is always exclusive! One cannot make a true statement about anything without excluding something else. Two plus two equals four. That excludes three or five. Truth and error are mutually exclusive. Many were offended by Jesus' statement, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Many who would broaden the way to God actually make it more exclusive than Jesus does.

My wife worked with a lady from India who was very moral, but totally deceived. She believed in reincarnation, holy cows, and various gods and idols. Yet, if there was anyone my wife would have trusted with her purse and her paycheck, it would have been the sweet lady from India. Mahatma Gandhi was also a good, moral man who would as soon have his tongue torn out by the roots as to curse, but that did not make him a Christian. He never claimed to be.

Christ warned in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Some will surely cry at that time, "But, Lord, don't you remember all that we did in your name? We filled vast auditoriums and stadiums with worshipers; we sang praises to your name; we built great edifices, hospitals, universities, and seminaries, all in your name, Lord! We printed Bibles and sent out missionaries, some of which gave their lives, all in your name, Lord! Remember?" and the Lord Jesus Christ is prophesied to answer them, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). So says your



Bible.

Think for a moment. If all these churches with all their various conflicting doctrines are right in the eyes of Jesus Christ, then who on earth was He talking about? Has anyone been deceived? Could you be deceived?

### The resurrection is the great equalizer

Those who may cry "foul" or accuse God unjustly simply do not see things from God's perspective. The resurrection is the great equalizer. All in their graves will have their opportunity for salvation, but each in his own order (1 Corinthians 15:23). God does not view death as man views death. God sees death as a "holding pattern"-a place of safety, if you will-until the resurrection. God is simply not calling everyone on earth at this time. "No man can come to me," Jesus announced, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and [here it is!] I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).).

Make no mistake: America is in for a rude awakening! The cries of human rights, women's rights, gay rights, animal rights, and the rights of this and that group will soon pale to insignificance as our beloved nation goes down and our peoples are taken captive-even as ancient Israel.

Bear in mind, God has a plan for your life-but so does the devil. Which plan are you helping fulfill? Are you walking the walk, or merely talking the talk?"Men and brethren, what should we do?"

Remember that a Christian is to be two things to the world: (1) a light, to show the way-an example of how we should live (Matthew 5:14); (2) a trumpet as a witness and a warning (Isaiah 58:1).

Once again we have heard the warning. Now let us go out and do the work and be a light by setting the right example.

The Church of God International is doing its level best to fulfill the twofold commission Jesus Christ gave to His church: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20) and to "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17).

If these words have pricked your heart-if you see a need in your personal life to repent and be baptized-there may be a Church of God International congregation or minister not too far from you. Why not write in and ask? You may be eternally grateful you did.

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## AMERICA UNDER FIRE!

Americans watched aghast as passenger filled jet aircrafts were deliberately plunged into the World Trade Center not once, but twice, and another into the Pentagon. We are used to seeing extravagant movies of death and destruction, but this was real, this was live and on TV. It was more devastating than any movie theater thriller or Clancy novel.

We Americans are a proud people. We have always been self-directing, individualistic, self-determining and free from the control or influence of others. Now we have been hurt, we have been wounded badly, but we have not been beaten! We have now seen just how vulnerable we are.

There is no doubt this is a Third World War! The only difference between this war and the Second World War is in identifying the enemy. It now seems clear that "Terrorists" are the enemy and this would include all those nations who harbor them!

In a series of preparations for war, President Bush signed a proclamation declaring that the country still faces "continuing and immediate threat of further attacks." He authorized a call-up of 50,000 military reservists, many to help patrol the skies, as the Pentagon stiffened security at military bases and U. S. Harbors.

A \$40 billion aid package was unanimously authorized by both Houses of Congress to help in the recovery from Tuesday's terrorist attacks and to wage war against those who sponsored them.

"This nation is peaceful, but fierce when stirred to anger," President Bush said at a prayer service in Washington. "This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others; it will end in a way and at an hour of our choosing.

"Our purpose as a nation is firm, yet our wounds as a people are recent and

unhealed and lead us to pray."

It would seem a great warning message has been given to the people of this nation. Will the nation as a whole see the lesson and understand the message? We have been hit hard where our pride is the greatest. In our self-sufficiency as individuals, in our great wealth as a nation and in our military might, which is the best trained and most powerful military force in the world. Yet, in spite of all of our strength, we were violated in our own country and our security shattered.

When tragedies strike such as this, people always ask, where was God? A better question would be, where were we? Have we as a nation whole-heartedly turned away from breaking God's eternal laws? Do we go to God in heart-felt prayer on a regular basis and ask Him to forgive us for our sins? Do we make God a part of the affairs of our everyday life? Is God really satisfied when all we can do is stand and give a silent one minute prayer, and then sing God Bless America? Do we really expect God to bless America?

Our busy schedules and the pressures of life make it easy to ignore or forget the lessons of the past. Paul points out to us that all the things that happened to the children of Israel should be examples for us today, and "they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Amos, an ancient prophet accused Israel of being at ease in procrastination. Amos described Israel as, "Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near." Israel thought, "If a time for repentance is coming God will first send a prophet as He always has before. We can then clean up our lives. Besides, it may not come in our generation at all." So, they cast off all moral restraint. No matter how God warned the people through famine, drought, blight, locusts, plagues and war they still ignored Him. Because they didn't get the "*Message*" they would have to meet Him face to face in judgment.

Well, God did send a prophet. He sent His only begotten son, Jesus Christ. Will this make a difference to our nation? Will this nation now turn to Him, and change their moral behavior and repent of their sins?

Today American families mourn the loss of thousands. Husbands have lost wives, wives have lost husbands and little children have lost their parents. The loss in material value is measured in billions of dollars. This is a most trying time for our nation. There is a dramatic story in the book of Isaiah. Chapter 40 refers to the restoration after the exile. Judah still had one hundred years of trouble before Jerusalem would fall then seventy years of exile. God told Isaiah to speak tenderly and to comfort Jerusalem. "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God" (Isaiah 40:1 NIV). God does love His people. God does love this nation of America. God is coming to rule the earth and judge all people. He will reunite Israel and Judah and restore them to glory. It is assuredly so, if we reach out to Him now, He will give us His comfort (Isaiah 40:1-11).

It is a common assumption among many that when God comforts, hardships are supposed to vanish away. But if that were always so, people would turn to God only to be relieved of pain and not out of love for Him. We must understand that being comforted can also mean receiving strength, encouragement and hope to deal with our hardships.

God doesn't promise a world free from danger, but He does promise His help whenever we face danger. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (Psalm 91:1-10).

Let all Americans turn to God in repentance of their sins and accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and King. Only when this is done will America and all nations of the world, for that matter, have the true strength and security that comes only from God.

It is reported throughout the Bible that war is the penalty of sin which is imposed as the result of human lust and covetousness. There is no government nor any leaders who can forgive sin. Therefore, the governments of men cannot permanently stop war which is its penalty. All people say they want peace, but peace cannot come unless the "Penalty" of sin is forgiven by an equal payment. It should be clear, "*Only Christ Can Stop All War*," because He alone paid the full penalty, death. Christ died so that we need not all die in the coming horrifying holocaust that He prophesied would come. "For then shall be *Great Tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved (*alive*), but for the *Elect's* sake those days shall be shortened."

Jesus proclaimed repentance in connection with the Gospel of God's Kingdom or government. In order to enter the Kingdom of God mankind must be willing to repent and change.

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## All Things Are Ready- Come to the Feast

*By Bob Swimm*

A football play book and a wedding invitation. This is surely a strange pairing, an unlikely combination; what could they possibly have in common? At first glance you might think absolutely nothing, but let's see. Every organized football team has a play book. The play book, depending on the skill and expertise of the head coach and his staff, outlines every possible offensive and defensive play allowed by the rules of the game. If the coach is innovative, it contains several trick or gadget plays. Once, I watched as Don Shula of the Miami Dolphins totally bamboozled my hometown Bengals with an on-sides punt, a play I had never seen before or have since.

Paul Brown, founder and head coach of both the Cleveland Browns and Cincinnati Bengals, was regarded as a football genius. His play book was so intricate and complex, even some players of superior physical ability and talent weren't successful because they could not learn it.

The legendary Vince Lombardi took over a woeful Green Bay Packer team in the '50s. They had been so bad that Coach Lombardi, in his inaugural address to the team, held the pigskin before them and said, "Gentleman, we're going back to the basics-this is a football!" Those players knew what a football was, and they knew all about play books, but Coach Lombardi wanted them to start all over, forget the failures of the past, shore up the foundation, learn the play book cover to cover, and strive for excellence and victory. They followed his instruction and Super Bowls followed. When God picked us for His team, we all knew what a Bible was, that it contained His Word. It was His play book for us, so to speak. But in the beginning, we didn't really understand it, how to block out sin, how to defend against the wiles of Satan, how to go on offense to achieve success and score the winning touchdown, achieving the Super Bowl of life-the Kingdom of God.

God's play book, the Holy Bible, is the entire plan of the game of life. It contains all the

"x's" and "o's."

Just as a football player receives his play book and an invitation to join the team, we, too, receive a play book along with an invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb. At this time of year we need to review our play books; go over the basics; make sure we're making the right plays; be sure we're at the right place at the right time, doing the job we've been called to do; and be a vital member of God's team. The fall holy days are upon us again. We've reached that crucial part of the game that foreshadows the dramatic conclusion:

Trumpets, the triumphant return of the King of Kings; Atonement, mankind at one with God, the king of this world deposed and sent away; the Feast of Tabernacles, the kingdom on earth with Jesus in charge; the Last Great Day, the resurrection of the rest of the dead, salvation at last for all who desire it.

The Feast of Tabernacles is training camp for God's team. The feast is also the rehearsal dinner for the coming wedding supper. Our invitation reads, "All things are ready, come to the feast!"

God's Feast of Tabernacles is rife with rich typology, it encompasses so much of God's ultimate plan, and teaches myriad lessons and insights into the mind of our great God. I'd like to briefly touch on four (of many) aspects for you to consider before this year's feast.

(1) Christ is tabernacling with mankind. John 1:14 states that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The word dwelt comes from the Greek skenoo, meaning to tent or to encamp, figuratively to occupy (as a mansion), or reside, as God did in the Tabernacle of old. The great God has determined to dwell with lowly man. What an honor to tabernacle with the Savior, especially at this special time of the year, as we respond to the invitation! Let's take time to review the parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22:2-14) and make sure we don't disdain our invitation with lame excuses.

(2) We are dwelling in temporary tabernacles-our own bodies. We are not citizens of Satan's world, but merely wandering as strangers, as did the ancient children of Israel in the desert. Our citizenship is in, or from, heaven. Paul aptly describes our temporary condition in 2 Corinthians 5:1-6. These physical tabernacles are merely dwelling places to house our hearts and minds and spirits as we grow in grace and knowledge, looking forward to the permanency of the Kingdom of God. At the feast, we learn the lesson in more detail as we leave our homes and apartments for eight days and dwell in temporary motel rooms, condos, or even literal tents. Even the type of housing we have teaches a lesson. Some of our bodies are svelte, handsome, well chiseled, or beautiful; some are quite ordinary, not so great to look upon. So, too, are some of our dwellings. Some are plush; some not so glamorous. But motel rooms, just like our bodies, are merely temporary.

(3) We're celebrating and looking forward to the Kingdom of God on this earth. I once heard a quite prominent speaker say the Feast of Tabernacles is not about the Kingdom of

God. I greatly dispute that. Our world is a mess and it grows worse each day, even in the great nations of the United States and Canada. The prophet Isaiah wrote extensively about that time when the government of God would be restored to this earth, and the feast is indeed a foretaste of that time. Isaiah speaks of a world without war (Isaiah 2:4); with a just government led by Jesus, the Prince of Peace (9:6,7); only tame animals (11:6,8); God's knowledge abundantly filling the earth (11:9); a land of feasting, without suffering, death, or a need for tears (25:6-8); and all diseases, afflictions, infirmities, and debilities being healed (35:3-6). And we've been invited to get in to the wedding supper first.

(4) We're simply there to enjoy, to rejoice, and to celebrate as surely as you do at a wedding reception, sharing the Bridegroom's (Christ's) joy. Deuteronomy 16:13-15 commands us to take our festival tithe, turn it into money, and spend it on food, drink, and whatever physical pleasure we desire (within the parameters of God's Law). It tells us to make it a family celebration. We're there to refresh spiritually as well. Attending services every day will give us the spiritual nourishment we need to learn God's ways and enjoy the physical properly, with balance. And God has promised even to protect our property while we're gone (Exodus 34:23,24).

Brethren, if advanced age, health problems, or financial difficulty prohibits us from attending, God understands. He does not expect us to do what we cannot do. If you absolutely cannot, don't put yourself on a guilt trip. He knows our hearts and minds even better than we do. At the same time, He knows what we can do. If all we have are excuses (cf. Matthew 22:2-14 or Luke 14:16-24), God takes no pleasure in that. He will not accept "It's my vacation time," "I'm too tired," "It costs too much," "It's too far," or whatever else is offered as reason for not coming up to the feast God has invited us to attend. As mentioned earlier, often players of great skill don't make the team even though they were top draft picks. Sometimes they can't learn the play book, sometimes they won't follow the rules, some want to do it their way and not the coach's, some just aren't team players. If we don't learn our play books or follow the Coach's instructions-if we aren't team players but instead do things our way-many with great spiritual tools and talents will be cut from the team.

When a football player doesn't make the team, a designated coach, called the reaper, knocks on the player's door and says something to the effect, "Coach wants to see you. And bring your play book." The Bible is clear that many are called, but few are chosen. There will be a time of weeping and gnashing of teeth. We know about the five foolish virgins who weren't ready when the bridegroom called for them. Those football players know what's coming when the reaper says, "Coach wants to see you...." Just as surely, some will hear the spiritual reaper say, "God wants to see you. And bring your wedding invitation-someone has taken your place." Brethren, let's not let that happen to any of us.

All things are ready, come to the feast. Come for the table now is spread; Ye famishing, ye weary come, and thou shalt be richly fed. Come for the door is open wide; A place of honor is reserved for you at the Master's side. Come, while He waits to welcome you. Delay not while this day is thine, tomorrow may never be. Leave every care and worldly strife. Come feast upon the love of God, and drink everlasting life. Hear the invitation,

come whosoever will; praise God for full salvation, for whosoever will. All things are ready, Come to the Feast!

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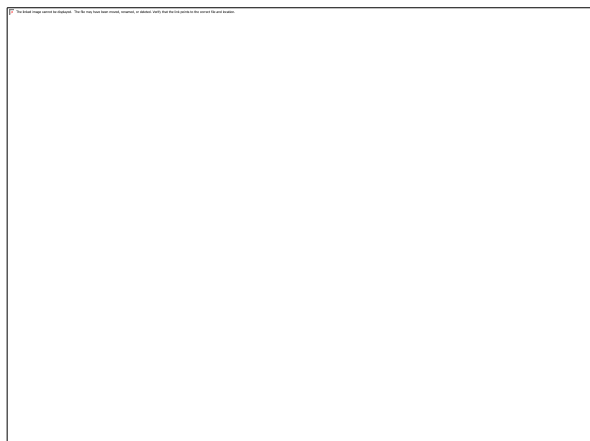
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## Scenes from the CGI's new home office facilities

At long last, the grueling task of moving tons of books, furniture, and office equipment is over, and the staff of the Church of God International is pleased to be fully "up and running" in its new facility in Tyler, Texas. The old facility, located approximately ten miles outside of Tyler, near Lake Palestine, "was much too large for our small staff," said Vance Stinson. "Our new place fits us perfectly," Mr.

Stinson said, adding that the sale of the church's old property and buildings and move to the new facility "was an exercise in good stewardship."

The new workplace is not as impressive as the old one, Mr. Stinson said, "but the work of God is not about impressive buildings and great material possessions. The church's mission is to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God to all nations, and accomplishing that task means making the best use of our resources. In other words, good stewardship." In addition to providing sufficient room for the various departments and

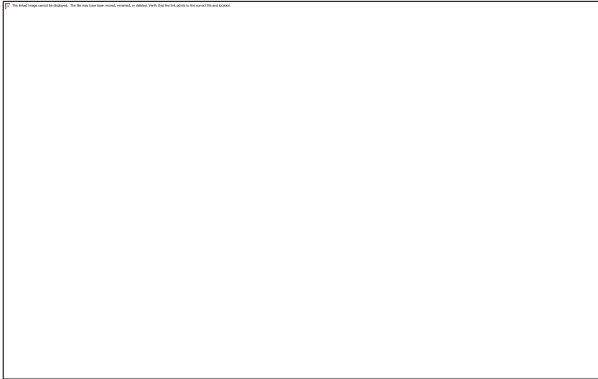




offices, the building has a meeting room, kitchen, and dining area that's perfectly suited for the local congregation's weekly Sabbath gatherings. All the church's employees are pleased with their new workplace, and members of the Tyler congregation are pleased with the new fellowship facility. "This may not be our last stop," Mr. Stinson said, "but we're glad to be here, and thankful for what we have."

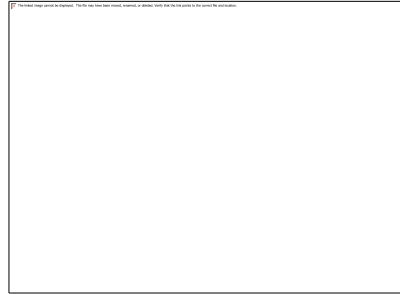
#### Top Photo

Darren Cary edits some last-minute reports that came in for this issue of The International News.

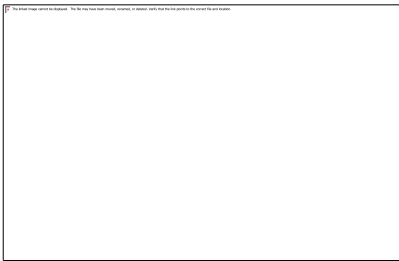


Vance

Stinson preaches the sermon, "What Is Love?" in the new meeting room.

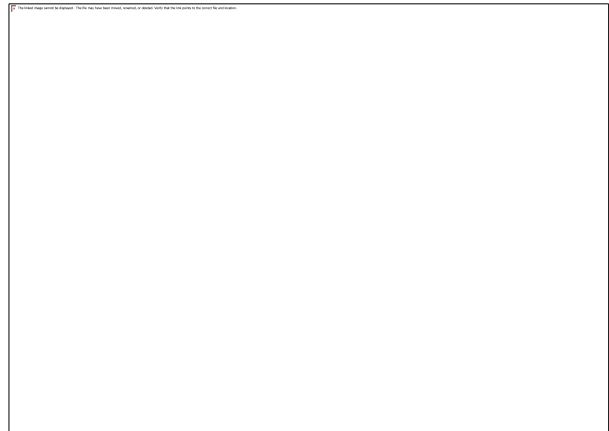


Ann Alpert takes care of business by keeping the financial records in order.



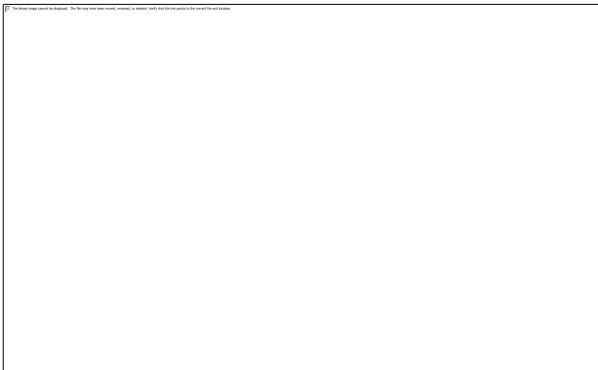
Roy Geddes operates

the recording equipment during Sabbath services each week.



Sue

Mayfield keeps us up to date with all the new postal standards.



The

conference room doubles as the library. At the other end of the room is a television with built-in VCR to review tapes and to teach Sabbath school.

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## Sacrificing Our Lives

*By Richard W. Williams*

Not too long ago a thought crossed my mind and it made me shudder. How would I respond if God came to me and told me that every person I knew and loved would be saved if I would be willing to lose my life eternally? For some reason, that thought seemed so real that it almost made me sick. I'm talking about real death here, eternal death. No chance that somehow God would change His mind.

Can you imagine such a thing like that happening to you? Take just a moment to consider that thought as if it were something that could really happen to you and you had to give an answer in the next few minutes.

As for myself, after a few minutes my thoughts changed from fearing such a terrible fate to those I love. I saw all of my friends and family in my mind's eye. As I looked upon their faces and came to those of my grandchildren, I knew what my answer would be. If I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that my sacrifice would save their lives for all eternity, I would give my life for them.

Is it foolish to consider such thoughts? Before you answer, please consider this: there were

two men in the Bible who might have had such thoughts. They actually faced a situation wherein they put their chance for eternal life on the line for others. In Exodus 32, we have the account of the children of Israel making and worshiping a golden calf. Moses returned from the mount carrying the two tablets and found them in their idolatry. God was ready to destroy every one of them, but Moses not only pleaded for them, he asked that his chance for eternal life be removed if they lost theirs.

"Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin-but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written'" (Exodus 32:31,32).

Was this a bluff? I really don't think so. I believe Moses sincerely meant every word. Do you think he acted foolishly? Do you think that he hoped God loved him and respected his past actions and his obedience enough to reconsider His angry words? What would we have done if one of us had been put in this situation in place of Moses? Thankfully, God's wrath was tempered, and Moses and many Israelites were spared.

"And the Lord said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book'" (Exodus 32:33).

The other person in the Bible who faced this question was Jesus Christ. When He put off His glory and became human, He took a chance that if He failed, He would have died eternally. And not only would He have died, but also every person who ever lived would have lost his or her hope of eternal life as well.

"Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8).

Again, do you think this was a bluff? Do you think Christ acted foolishly? Do you think that He hoped that God loved Him and respected His past actions and His obedience enough to figure out some other way if He had failed? What would we have done if one of us had been put in this situation in place of Jesus Christ? Would we have left our position of absolute power and eternal life to take such a chance for mankind, especially considering that the mankind we sought to save would initially hate and kill us? Thankfully, Jesus said "yes" and successfully finished His mission and made a way for all His creation to eventually be saved.

Is this idea, then, so really abstract and foolish for us to consider after all? Consider the verse just before the last one quoted:

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

If Christ's mind is in us, we will have His great love and compassion for others. "Greater

love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13, NIV).

We have heard of heroic accounts of someone losing his life trying to save others. But I think Christ had something a bit harder (if you can imagine that) than simply dying for our friends.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1,2).

God wants us to be living sacrifices in such a way that He can use us to bring others into the truth, thereby saving their lives. This demands that we live godly lives so others will see Christ in us. This means we have to have the right priorities and goals in life. This mindset is absolutely necessary for us to know and do the perfect will of God. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:24-26).

Is it possible that unless we are instrumental in helping to save others that we may not save ourselves? Are we really ready and willing to give our lives to save others? What is our answer? What we do, say, and think in our daily lives and in our relationships with others are telling God and the world what our answer is.

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# Toronto CGI holds 'CDC' classes

*By Noel Scoburgh*

**TORONTO, Ontario, Canada**-The Toronto congregation of the Church of God International has just concluded its first Christian Development Classes (CDC), which were fulfilling and enriching successes for several reasons.

The classes explored biblical truths on such topics as "Who is God?" "Evolution," "Pentecost," "The Lord's Supper," and "Why Christ Must Return," to name a few. The truths of such topics were explored from a biblical perspective-God's point of view. This approach brought to light several prevailing misconceptions about the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible. Also discussed were current news issues of the day affecting both the local and international communities. The Toronto congregation voiced its opinions on controversial subjects such as abortion, welfare, and the death penalty, to name a few.

Togetherness, cooperation, fellowship, leadership-these were a few qualities that emerged from the Christian Development Classes. Members working together in groups to produce a presentation was most rewarding. There were opportunities to learn about oneself and others as well as opportunities of self-development.

Those who had a chance to be a program director experienced leadership. I myself was a program director. As such, it was a learning experience to suggest an overall strategy for a class, and to coordinate and preside over rehearsal meetings, as well as making the presentation. The experience naturally made one look forward to the Kingdom of God where there will be more responsibilities.

CDC also afforded members an opportunity to improve communication and public speaking skills. To expound upon a biblical truth was exhilarating. No doubt others thought the same as well.

Members also discovered that oftentimes you yourself become your best teacher when you research and participate in CDC. I discovered some members are natural organizers and leaders while others are more efficient on executing their duties. I learned to cooperate and work with others, and in so doing got a chance to fellowship with other church members outside of church.

The Christian Development Classes that were presented to the Toronto congregation of the CGI were very spiritually enriching as well as physically rewarding. I look forward to the next session of CDC to learn about God and His precious truths. Praise God!

The Toronto congregation is grateful to our pastor, Mr. Bill Watson, the CDC director, for his efforts in bringing the worthwhile project to Toronto.

**CUTLINE: EXPLAINING THE FAITH**-Steve Agnew (above) and Claudette Daniels (below) were among several of the Toronto congregation who made biblical presentations in CDC classes.

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## A Brief Study on Women and Eldership

By Vance A. Stinson

*Editor's Note: The following study paper was written in the early 1990s, but has never been published-until now. The author cautions that, while the overall conclusion of this study accurately represents the position of the Church of God International, it is only a study paper and is not necessarily the "final word" on all the issues addressed herein.* Generally, those in favor of ordaining women as elders base their conclusions on the following progression of thought:

1. Patriarchal societies (societies-generally male-dominant-consisting of father-led families) were a result of the fall of man. "[Y]our desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).
2. Jesus ordained that the creation order (the original order, before the fall) be restored in the church. (See Matthew 19:1-8.)
3. Paul, speaking to the church, said: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Thus, Paul confirmed the restoration of the creation order.

This three-point progression of thought appears reasonable on the surface. However, a careful study of the relevant scriptures reveals two major errors: The first is that patriarchal society was a result of the fall. The second is that Paul's statement (#3) rules out headship/subordination in the husband-wife union and in the church. As we shall see, Paul confirmed both equality and headship/subordination, and cited the creation account for authority.

Since Paul appealed to the creation account, let's see what the creation account actually says. But before we begin, it is vital that we understand that the first chapters of Genesis

are not merely a historical account. The sequence of events and the descriptions of those events are intended to convey messages that are not otherwise stated in the account. As we shall later see, Paul confirms this important truth.

First, consider Genesis 1:26-28: "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind [Adam] in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind [Adam] in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"

Compare Genesis 2:22-24: "Then the man said [when he saw the woman God had made from his rib], 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman [Hebrew: ishshah], for out of Man [Hebrew: ish] this one was taken.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh."

What do we learn from these two passages? Notice the following points:

1. Both are called "Adam" (translated "humankind" in 1:26,27, NRSV); both bear God's image.
2. Both are to have dominion.
3. They are one (in marriage).
4. The two are of the same substance ("bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh").

What do these four points suggest? Equality! When the man named the animals, "there was not found a helper as his partner" (2:20)-that is, his intellectual and emotional equal was not to be found within the animal kingdom. There was no creature like himself, bearing God's image, with whom he could identify or relate to. He needed a partner, an equal, with whom he could share his thoughts, his life, his love, his goals, and his dreams and desires. So God created a perfect match, one like the man, an equal. But does this kind of equality rule out headship and subordination? Let's look more closely at the Genesis account:

"[T]hen the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil....The Lord God made the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.' Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.' So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord

God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:7-9, 15-24).

With our modern way of thinking, we might tend to view this account as nothing more than a sequence of historical events (though some "modernists" consider it mythical), rather than understand that the sequence of events and descriptions of those events reveal much more than mere history. Notice the following points:

1. Adam (the man) was created first. Priority in creation denotes headship, as Paul later confirms.
2. Eve was Adam's helper. This suggests subordination, not inferiority. (Subordination and inferiority are two entirely different things-it's important to understand this.) This, too, Paul will confirm.
3. The name of humankind (Adam) was given to the man. This suggests headship.
4. Adam named the animals, and gave the name of "woman" (ishshah) to Eve. This, too, suggests Adam's headship.
5. Adam received God's instructions concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil before Eve was made. This is an indication of Adam's responsibility as head of the union.

The above five points (note: #3, #4, and #5 are secondary to #1 and #2) show us that God established the patriarchal system of governance (headship of the father) in the family before the fall. Those who say it was a result of the fall are in error.

Now, with all this emphasis on Adam's headship-his priority in creation, his naming the animals and woman, and so on-we find a curious thing in chapter 3. Adam seems to temporarily step out of the picture. Let's read the account:

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'? The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" [Notice the addition of "nor shall you touch it." Some commentators believe this indicates that Eve received this instruction from Adam.] But the serpent said to the woman, 'You shall not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the fruit was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate..." (Genesis 3:1-6).

Adam had failed to act responsibly, as God-ordained head of the union, by allowing Eve to succumb to the lure of the adversary. The text tells us that Adam "was with her." This may mean that Adam had been there all along. If so, then the fact that he did nothing but stand idly by as the devil drew his wife into deception indicates that a role reversal had taken place. The remainder of the chapter deals with the results of the fall. One such result is found in verse 16: To the woman, God said, "[Y]our desire shall be for your husband, and



he shall rule over you." This was not the establishment of the headship of the father in the family, it was the corruption of the patriarchal system! In effect, God said, "Adam, because you behaved irresponsibly by listening to your wife in this matter, rather than stepping in and preventing this occurrence, you're going to have to struggle and sweat and hurt and spend your time fighting the thorns and thistles until the day you die. And Eve, you're going to have to put up with him!" Thus, one of the results of the fall was the corruption of the patriarchal form of leadership God had originally put in place.

The above deals with leadership in the family. But what about the church? Indeed, Jesus Christ intended that the creation order be restored in the family. But did He intend that the same pattern of headship/subordination exist in His church? Are the elders of the church to be viewed as "fathers"? Or will a matriarchal system suffice in the New Covenant?

First, before we examine Paul's instructions in this matter, let's consider some important points:

1. As we have noted from a careful analysis of the Genesis account, a patriarchal system was established by God before the fall.
2. Male leadership in families and tribes is seen in God's selection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the naming of Jacob's sons as heads of the tribes of Israel, and in the selection of the seventy elders (Sanhedrin) in the time of Moses.
3. Male leadership in community worship is seen in the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. There were plenty of female Levites, but they never served as priests.
4. Christ ordained twelve men as foundational "pillars" of His New Testament church. This is especially important in view of the fact that He was a "liberator"- that is, He slapped society in the face where societal views of women were concerned.
5. Throughout the New Testament, we find that only men were ordained as elders in the church, and that instructions for the ordination of elders concerned men, not women. Indeed, we find women involved in ministry, but not in serving the church as elders (pastors, bishops, shepherds, presbyters, etc.).
6. Male headship in the church is endorsed-even advocated-in Paul's instructions. We will examine these instructions more fully in the body of this letter.
7. God is presented as a Father, not a "Parent," not a "Mother." This is most important of all, for, as we shall see, the Fatherhood of God is to be reflected both in the family and in the leadership of the church.

Many feminists in the church world claim that Paul's comments about the role of women in the church were never intended to apply universally. They say that local disputes were in view, and that Paul's rulings were designed to settle those disputes. After all, they claim, the women of Paul's time did not have the educational opportunities women today have, so some of them were attempting to exercise their new freedom in areas wherein they lacked qualifications. Because they couldn't read the Scriptures, they had no business trying to teach the Scriptures. But now that women are as educated as men, Paul's restrictions do not apply-or so they say.

But does the feminist view represent a sound exegesis of the Pauline texts concerning headship/subordination in the church? Let's see for ourselves what Paul really said, beginning with 1 Corinthians 14:33-37:

"(As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinated, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?) Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord."

Notice the emphasized portions of the passage. Let's consider each of them:

1. "all the churches": This proves that Paul did not have a tiny sliver of one remote area of the church in view. He was speaking of the church universal. This rules out the "local application" theory.
2. "as the law also says": What law? The principle is not directly stated in any of the commandments, statutes, and judgments of the Law of Moses. Obviously, Paul was speaking of the creation account (Genesis 2). As we have seen, the patriarchal system was established at the creation of humankind, and Paul acknowledges that fact. (It is important to realize that, generally, when Paul speaks of "the law," he speaks of the good and perfect will of God as stated and reflected both in the Law of Moses and the Genesis account.)
3. "what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord": This, especially in view of the above two points, rules out the idea that Paul's instructions (throughout this entire context) were "Pauline judgments" designed to curtail certain cultural problems.

Now, what did Paul mean when he said that the women "should be silent in the churches," that they "are not permitted to speak," and that if they want to know something, "let them ask their husbands at home"? Some commentators say that Paul was attempting to correct a situation that grew out of the synagogal pattern of worship services. In the synagogue, women assembled on one side of the room and men assembled on the other. When a woman had questions about something the rabbi said, she would loudly voice her question to her husband, who was sitting on the other side of the room. Of course, such a practice would prove disruptive, so Paul admonished the women to do their questioning at home. While this fits the context (see preceding verses, 26-32, where Paul addresses the problem of disorderly worship), it is uncertain. We do not know for sure that the synagogal pattern was being followed in Corinth. But we can be certain about the underlying principle Paul is expounding. Paul's admonition, then, applies to the following:

1. The pulpit ministry. This, as we shall see, is borne out by other scriptures.
2. Any speaking or questioning that is viewed as a lack of subordination. This includes openly challenging the pastor, disrupting worship services with questions, or any other speaking that suggests disregard for the headship role of either the husband or the pastor.

But does this general principle mean that there is never a time when women may speak in the church? No, it does not. But remember, the exception does not establish the general rule! In 1 Corinthians 11:2-12, we find both the general rule and the exception; and, we find Paul's confirmation of both headship/subordination and equality, just as we saw in the

Genesis account. Let's consider the account:

"I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you. But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of the wife, and God is the head of Christ. Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disregards his head [Christ], but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disregards her head [her husband]- it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God."

The veil, or "covering" (KJV), symbolized the woman's subordination to her husband.

That's why Paul insisted on a covering for women in public worship services (when praying or prophesying). To be without one was comparable to being shorn, which was the sign of an adulteress. (In those days, adulteresses were not put to death, but were shorn or shaven as punishment for their sin.) Let's consider three important points:

1. Certain women did "prophesy." But how did they do it? Did they stand before the congregation and share the revelations God had given to them? Apparently they did, though we are not given enough information to be certain as to precisely how this was done. But, as stated above, this was the exception, not the general rule; and the exception does not establish the general rule. Further, they were to be "covered" when they prophesied in order to display their subordination to their husbands and to the leadership of the church.
2. Paul appeals to the Genesis account (the creation order) in establishing headship/subordination in the church. This is seen in verses 7-10 ("he is the image and reflection of God"; "man was not made from woman, but woman from man," and so on).
3. Paul confirms equality of the sexes. This is seen in verses 11 and 12 ("man comes through woman...all things come from God"). Clearly, equality does not conflict with headship/subordination. It is a matter of understanding what areas these two principles apply. Where salvation, fellowship, and spirituality are concerned, men and women are absolute equals. But where headship/subordination in the family and in the church are concerned, each has his/her designated role. We see, then, that Paul understood the Genesis account precisely the same way we understand it (as presented earlier in this study). He confirms both headship/subordination and equality.

Now, with all the above in view, let's consider the passage that has generated more than a little debate in the church world, 1 Timothy 2:11-14: "Let the women learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman

was deceived and became a transgressor." Note the following:

1. In establishing that women are not to teach (in public worship services, obviously) or to have authority over the man (as ecclesiastical heads-pastors, elders), Paul appeals to the creation order: Adam was made first.
2. In further establishing his position, he refers to the fact that Eve was deceived and became a transgressor. This has been interpreted variously. Some say this shows that women are more susceptible to deception than men and, therefore, are not qualified to teach or lead the church. Others say this was due to the "curse" that was placed on Eve, and that this "curse" was passed on to all women. Neither interpretation is satisfactory. And neither history nor the Bible supports either. Paul did not say that Eve was the sole transgressor. He merely pointed out that Eve was the first to sin, indicating that a role reversal had taken place-just as we saw in our examination of Genesis 3. The Genesis account shows that Adam was "out of his place" (as was Eve), and Paul merely refers to that fact in illustrating the God-ordained principle of headship/subordination.

Earlier, we noted that God is presented in Scripture as a Father, never as a "Mother" or "Parent." Further, we noted that the Fatherhood of God is to be reflected both in the family and in the church. This suggests that the elders are, in a sense, "fathers" in the household of the faithful. Perhaps we should pause here to examine a passage of Scripture that, at first glance, seems to rule out the idea of elders as father figures in the church. The passage is Matthew 23:8-11, the words of Christ Himself. Let's examine His words:

"But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father-the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant." Just what did Jesus mean? Do His words rule out the assertion that the elders of the church are "fathers" in the household of the faithful? No, not at all. Abraham is called "father Abraham" in the New Testament. Paul said to the Corinthians, "I have become your father in the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15). And we are told clearly that God appointed teachers and instructors in the church. What, then, did Jesus mean?

In context, Jesus was pointing out that the scribes and Pharisees, because of their great vanity, loved to be called "rabbi." They regarded themselves the fathers of the faithful, and loved to be acknowledged as such. But Jesus, recognizing that their love of veneration and lofty titles was due to their vanity, said, in effect: "Don't you be like them. Some of you are the teachers, the instructors, the spiritual fathers, and shepherds who are to lead my flock. But don't be like the scribes and the Pharisees; don't let your positions go to your head; don't seek the admiration of those I place under your loving care. Rather, be servants of all." So, yes, the leadership of the church is to reflect the Fatherhood of God. But "father" connotes love, care, kindness, and the desire to provide good spiritual nourishment for the household of God. God has ordained it; let's abide in it.

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