



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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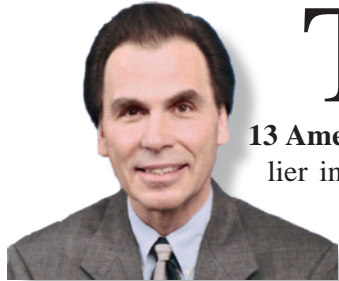
"Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13)

Summer 2012

Warning: The United States Is In Decline!

Some may say the title of this article is highly exaggerated, while others will consider it quite seriously. But like it or not, the trajectory is more obvious today than ever before in the history of this comparably young nation. The decline of the United States of America is now becoming increasingly apparent in many different ways. Yet, some will insist the nation will bounce back—it will do fine, America is resilient; but is there something different about this time?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

The 4th of July will be the 236th "birthday" of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which separated the original 13 American colonies from the British Empire. Earlier in that providential year of 1776, John Adams submitted a resolution that set the circumstances in motion for a vote from the Continental Congress for independence. Thomas Jefferson was selected to compose the draft which Congress would edit for finalizing the language of this *Declaration of Independence* that was voted on July 2, 1776. After approving and ratifying the document two days later, on July 4, the United States took the official position that it was *independent* of the British Empire. However, that was not mutually understood until the Revolutionary War was finished in 1783 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, culminating in England's departure and the colonies officially recognized as a separate nation.

But *make no mistake*; the end of the Revolutionary War and Britain's leaving was by no means the end of the struggles confronting this emerging nation. Since the time independence was declared, it has been a constant struggle to maintain human and civil rights, along with keeping the peace for its citizenry that was ideologically conceived initially by the political forefathers who envisioned a *free nation* from the tyranny of Britain's King George III.

This year, some 236 years later, the United States reflects many *changes* and includes many political and social features that are different from what those original forefathers had in mind when they envisioned a "free nation" based on *Judeo-Christian values*. (Request our *free* reprint article: *North America: Listen!*) Clearly, these changes are too numerous to comprehensively address here. But suffice it to say, there are a few of the more serious and alarming ones that indeed need mentioning, if for no other reason than to help us realize, by contrast, we are in "unchartered waters" and *adrift from the God of our fathers*. Clearly, we are living in a time like no other, when considering the circumstances we have allowed and the legislation our leaders have passed, which now define the United States' culture in the twenty-first century. Our present NATIONAL CONDITION is without historical precedent, and the political paralysis, civil unrest, and social polarization is a clear illustration of this.

For decades, leaders of the United States, from the entire business and political spectrum of Independents and Democrats, Republicans and Libertarians, Progressives, Socialists, and Communists alike, have had a wide array of influence and impact upon the country's direction; and today we are reaping the fruit of these unfortunate decisions and policies. Leaders within the legislative, judicial, and administrative segments of the political circles on the state and federal levels have consistently challenged many laws that formally provided definition and clarity to this country's *Christian identity and direction*; and now have *resulted in changes* that have blurred, or altogether abandoned those original intents and laws.

Decline, continued on page 3

Armor of God Periodical

The story of the Church of God down through the annals of history is quite a saga. It is written in the blood, sweat, and tears of literally tens of thousands of God-fearing devoted people simply caught in the *crossfire* of so-called "Christian" religious persecution. Over the centuries, this *true story* develops into an epic that is sometimes stranger than fiction when considering who was responsible for inflicting what some considered a merciless genocide on quiet, hard-working, God-fearing family communities—all in the name of Jesus Christ and Rome's universal (Catholic) church.

What is the truth concerning these historical benchmarks that discolor and blister the alleged Christian church? How is it that a "work of charity" in the name of Jesus Christ can continue to be so revered in our modern day and yet be responsible for so much innocent bloodshed and not be held accountable, but instead remain believable? Is it because most of today's secular society and culture is unaware? Perhaps they just don't care, because *pop-culture* has them too distracted. Maybe they really are too busy to take the time to search out the information disclosing these atrocities and changes. Or perhaps many have just simply lost a love for God's truth.

Whatever the reason, the current issue of the *Armor of God* has assembled a variety of in-depth, hard-hitting articles revealing information which for some will be extremely eye-opening regarding Christian church history. You will be exposed to an assortment of particular specifics concerning so-called cherished *Christian* traditions and beliefs that will explain there is nothing Christian about them; and furthermore, Jesus, His apostles, and the New Testament do not mention them at all.

We have attempted to make it easy for you, the reader, to obtain some of this basic fundamental information that should be easy for you to evaluate, and if you choose, access additional information for further education in this segment of ecclesiastical history. So pay particular attention in the course of the articles and sidebars for recommendations for more **FREE** material designed to improve your awareness of just how much of our Lord Jesus Christ's teaching has been compromised and abandoned. If you are sincerely seeking the truth, this issue should be of particular value to you. Remember, our Lord said, "I am the truth and the light..." and yes, the truth will indeed set you free! Ω

You may order your copy or see the magazine on the web page at www.cgi.org.

What's inside...

Beware of Doctrines of Demons

Evan Chase
Page 2

The Fear Factor

Lloyd Cary
Page 6

What Is the Church of God Int'l?

John Coish
Page 8

Our Church Culture

John Coish
Page 9

Obedience to God—Burden or Blessing?

Lloyd Cary
Page 10

Church News

Page 12–15

A Very Different COG Organization

Page 16

www.cgi.org

Beware of Doctrines of Demons!

by Evan J. Chase



Evan J. Chase

Throughout the history of the church Jesus Christ built, there have been false doctrines, theories, and teachings that deceived and divided congregations.

It is no different now, in the twenty-first century. The root cause is, of course, the ultimate divider, Satan the deceiver of the whole world (Revelation 12:9).

The Apostle Paul originally established the church at Ephesus. As he traveled, he left his beloved fellow-minister Timothy in charge. Timothy dealt with a lot of similar problems that we have today.

Notice 1 Timothy 4:1–2: “Now the Spirit speaks expressly that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils [demons]. Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” Notice that those adhering to false doctrines can be “seared” to the extent they are “scarred” by them! Entertaining false doctrines and pet theories is playing with fire! Paul goes on to list and describe some of the false theories and teachings such as religious celibacy and vegetarianism as a commanded religious regimen (Verse 3). Paul was well versed in the still common human tendency to go off on a tangent exploring new ideas (Acts 17:21). We see in the New Testament epistles there were warnings about false doctrine infiltrating the church (Galatians 1:6–9; 2 Peter 2:1–3)! History confirms that the early New Testament church became unrecognizable by the time Roman Emperor Constantine confirmed “Christianity” as the state religion at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. Those who still observed the “faith once delivered” (Jude 3) became a small, scattered remnant, persecuted and driven into relative obscurity! A related account is found in *The Outline of History* by famous British author H. G. Wells.



Pet Theories

What are some examples of these false divisive theories? We know through some easy online or encyclopedic research that the doctrines of Sunday-keeping, Easter, Christmas, and Lent were all imposed on Christianity in the third century by the Roman Empire—but those doctrines infiltrated the church long before that. In later centuries, more pet theories and unscriptural teachings continued to penetrate both true and apostate church organizations. Other examples we are familiar with are the rapture, 1844 and other dates predicting Christ’s return, holy names, not preaching the Gospel to the world, the “health and wealth gospel,” conspiracy theories, headline theology, and idolization of human church leaders or founders, etc. Many congregations up to this present day have been split apart due to these and other equally unimportant ideas, forming splinter groups, much to the church’s shame (see 1 Corinthians 1:10–13).



The Only Prevention

The only prevention and cure is to stay close to the “trunk of the tree”—to the basics: proving to yourself God exists, His plan with the foundation of Jesus Christ, the apostles and prophets, the basic doctrines revealed such as repentance, baptism, salvation by grace, God’s laws, the Sabbath and holydays. Send for our free reprint, *Statement of Beliefs of the Church of God International*, and make that a guide. We also have free articles and CDs dealing with all foundational truths. A complete list is on our website at www.cgi.org.

Yes, Jesus Christ said He would build His Church—and the gates of Hades would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18)!

The reality is, we have a *choice*: To follow Him, or follow our prideful and selfish ideas right out of the light of God’s plan for us. So guard your mind against these subtle tools of Satan! Ω

“Welcome to the Church of God International!”

The Church of God International sponsors the *Armor of God* telecast, provides written material on a wide range of biblical topics, and has congregations in the United States, Canada, Jamaica, the Philippines, and Australia, with affiliates in other parts of the world. We invite you to find out more about us, our purpose and mission, our beliefs, and our customs. Send for our newly revised booklet, ***Welcome to the Church of God International!*** Simply send your request to:

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Our Great Commission

“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: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19–20).

Visit us at



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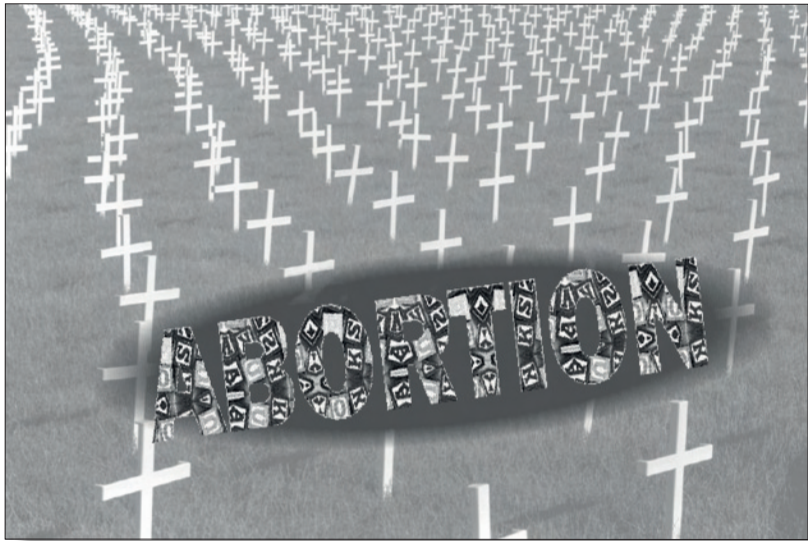
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Decline, continued from page 1

Some Examples to Consider

There are so many items that could be mentioned which are considered “benchmarks” or “turning points” in redefining the country’s original intended culture. However, because it has been a slow process, incrementally impacting the hegemony over decades of time, the changes have been subtle—hardly noticeable, but unquestionably would horrify and disgust those original pilgrims of the 1600s and our political forefathers of a few hundred years ago.



Abortion Crosses

Abortion

For example, common sense would tell us something so simple as a “right to life” would not be questioned. Yet unbelievably, it is! Instead, it has turned into a political football that has been “volleyed” back and forth, debated every which way but loose, and now is *widely accepted* as an alternative to birth control—because in many cases, that’s exactly how it’s used. It’s not a myth, as some would want you to believe! I mention this because unfortunately, some 3,000 to 3,500 women PER DAY, in the USA alone, don’t realize the *actual time* for “choice” is BEFORE engaging in sexual activity instead of AFTER one is pregnant! Otherwise, the decision of “choice” becomes a life or death issue. Our forefathers *never* intended the laws of this land to allow the total *disregard of the unborn* in order to protect the “rights” of those who engage in irresponsible sexual activity. But some will argue that’s not necessarily true—this is “progressive” thinking, due to incest, rape, or the safety and health of the mother and baby—surely there is justification when considering these situations?

But not so! According to the statistics compiled by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and the Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), one percent *or less* of all abortions are due to rape and incest, and only five to six percent are due to health and safety conditions of the mother or baby. Frankly, abortion has become a “convenience factor” for “the many” who have approached their sexual behavior irresponsibly. Unfortunately, for “the many,” abortion has become just another way of avoiding accountability. The result, according to both the CDC and the AGI, is that approximately 50 million babies have lost their lives (that’s about 1.4 times the population of Canada) since Roe vs. Wade was passed in 1973. Shockingly, about 48 percent have had *multiple* abortions.

Aberrant sexual behaviors have become ACCEPTED AS LEGITIMATE LIFESTYLES and a cultural mainstay. For instance, pornography/adult entertainment, including “child porn,” has become a \$10–\$15 billion industry in the United States. Also, according to the National Center for Health Statistics (2007), approximately 40 percent of all babies born in the United States are currently born *out of wedlock*. Unbelievably, the stigma of having children while engaged in fornication (unmarried) has become *normalized—accepted as culturally OK!* Even older adults, in addition to the “famous”—such as movie stars and athletes—are all just living together and having children. Unfortunately, this provides social credibility, supporting acceptance for this kind of non-committal and irresponsible behavior. Over the years, it has become very destructive to the children, who in some cases don’t even know who the other parent is, as well as destabilizing the framework of the family and American culture in general.

Additionally, these trends have influenced our teenagers. They view these “models” and consider sexual relations outside of marriage as normal and acceptable—never giving thought to the responsibilities of an unwanted pregnancy. However, though teen pregnancy rates have dropped about six percent over the last few years, the USA still has the highest rate of teen pregnancies among the Western industrialized nations. Eighty-two percent of all teen pregnancies are unintended. Eleven percent of all births in the USA are born to teenagers, and nearly *one-third of those teens choose abortion* (ref. Alan Guttmacher Institute).



Homosexuality

Homosexuality has also made some very serious inroads toward redefining marriage and has achieved a level of success in “normalizing” same-sex marriages within the United States. Presently, six states have legalized marriage for homosexual couples. Many states are actively attempting to defend and protect their position of marriage being defined as a heterosexual relationship, not a homosexual relationship. However, because this issue is filled with such passion and relentless effort from the homosexual community, in combination with private interest groups attempting to obfuscate any “absolutes” that would support the traditional heterosexual definition for marriage, the expectations, consequently, are for more normalization of this *abnormal lifestyle*, along with additional states institutionalizing same-sex marriages in the future, combined with legal rights to adopt children into the homosexual lifestyle. And now, for the first time in history, **THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES HAS AFFIRMED HIS ACCEPTANCE OF HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGES.**

The above-mentioned *social scourges* have had their effect on the family, as has divorce. Presently, about one out of every two marriages in the United States fails for one reason or another. This impacts the children also, who are forced to make choices they shouldn’t have to make in order to accommodate the break-up of the family. Many children get confused by these social shifts and disruptions and begin to look to other activities for comfort, belonging, and identity.

Urban Gangs

One of these activities is URBAN GANGS! Today, they are on the rise in the United States! In 1970, only about half the states had any sign of gang activity. Today, *every state* has some gang activity, with many of these gangs moving out into the suburbs and rural areas. There are about 24,500 separate gangs in the United States, with approximately 800,000 members averaging between the ages of 14–19 years old (ref. National Youth Violence Prevention Resource, NYVPR). These gangs account for the majority of teen violence in that demographic.



For example, the city of Denver found that though only about 14 percent of the teens were in gangs, those gangs were responsible for about 89 percent of the violent crimes committed by this age group. Also a gang member is about 60 percent more likely to experience death by homicide than the general population. Generally, there are more male gang members than females, but their numbers are growing and trending upward (NYVPR).

In addition, the gang situation is exacerbated by the Mexican drug cartels that now have representation in *every* state and in *hundreds* of towns and cities within the United States. The Tijuana, Las Zetas, and Gulf Cartels are just a few who are now operating within the borders of the United States and conducting their crime and drug trades! They are teaming up with local gangs within the cities, sharing territories, drugs, warehouses, and personnel for enhancing their operations. Gangs are a major problem gaining momentum and

Decline, continued on page 4

Decline, continued from page 3

jeopardizing the very well being and safety of thousands of law abiding American citizens. Threats of mob violence and/or mob retail robberies, home invasions, recruitment, terrorism of the elderly, muggings, rapes, and car jacking, are now all daily concerns for literally tens of thousands of Americans throughout the country.

Here's the point: Our young people are *under siege*, and consequently the *future* of our nation is *at risk*! Laws have been passed outlawing prayer and any references to Christian values in school. They have been replaced with secularism and moral relativism, conceding to more liberal programs like handing out condoms to our teens at school, or promoting “gender preference classes” at the elementary level. So much of this causes “drama” that aggravates confusion with interpersonal relationships that often break down and play out with teen sex, pregnancies, bullying, or school shootings. Combine that with the misguided advice they pick up from *Saturday Night Live*, sit-coms, *The Simpsons*, and MTV, and you realize it's not hard to understand why our young people are troubled. If we think this is an acceptable means for stabilizing our youth and helping them to understand life—using pop culture to define right from wrong—it just goes to prove how disconnected and reprobate our social judgment has become.

Additionally, the disappointments our young people experience when role models let them down due to violently emotional, immoral, or addictive behaviors and outbursts only further confirms our awareness as to just how brutal and toxic these conditions are for our children to learn from and grow up in today. When considering these circumstances, it's no surprise *teen suicide is on the rise* over the last 15 years according to the CDC.

Corruption

On the other hand, many business and political leaders in the United States have fallen to the temptations of corruption due to a host of reasons, from financial swindling, to infidelity, to living secret lifestyles on the “dark side” that are unacceptable for their public persona—men like Bernie Madoff, former non-executive Chairman of the NASDAQ, John Edwards, former Senator and presidential candidate, former Congressman Anthony Weiner, and so many others that could be mentioned from different sides of the aisle. They have violated the trust of their families, clients, and constituents, consequently losing their reputations, positions, and ultimately even their families in some cases. The amount of *corruption and betrayal* that has infected the business community, politics, and familial relationships, from the common man to the leaders of our government in some cases, has grown in such magnitude that it is stunningly unconscionable and repugnant. And now most recently, as I write this article, eleven Secret Service agents, responsible to protect the President of the USA, have been charged with allegations of immoral behavior while on the job, protecting the President on a recent visit to Columbia; and it appears this isn't the first time this has happened! This kind of behavior at this level, within some of the most professional organizations inside the United States, obviously illustrates dereliction of duty and something far more seriously wrong with the leadership and social underpinnings of the United States.

Some More Examples to Consider

Though the above-mentioned issues are just a small “snapshot” of very limited segments of the *enormous* number of social maladies that are now threatening the very fiber of the United States with far-reaching potential problems for the future, there are some other seriously stressing conditions on the horizon which cannot be ignored much longer. They are fast approaching and pressing to be addressed in the soon coming years—it concerns the financial condition and national economic stability of the United States as a viable nation, and its interaction with the global community of nations within the geopolitical dynamics of world politics. Let me take a moment to explain some points of consideration regarding these future economic issues that have become a huge concern and are guaranteed to grow more threatening and jeopardizing to our currency, way of life, and national security.

As many of you know by now, the United States has exceeded its economic gross national output (GDP) with debt! That's right! Our nation's national debt (approximately \$16 trillion) is now greater than our total economic yearly output (approximately \$15 trillion per year). Regrettably, we are *continuing* to generate more debt at the approximate rate of \$1.5 to

\$2.0 trillion per year. In other words, we are currently generating more debt than what we make! Simply stated, unless some very severe *austerity measures* are taken to reduce our national spending, and mammoth cuts and reductions of unfunded liabilities (i.e. Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, federal pensions, etc.) are made, our country's future for our children's children will be a very uncomfortable and difficult place, if we have a nation at all. This is something all of us need to understand very plainly, honestly, and openly—PLEASE ALLOW THIS TO RESONATE WITH YOU.

However, as sober as that is to comprehend, this is only part of the economic picture. *Not* included in our national debt figure is the *unfunded* future obligations “Uncle Sam” has promised to the American people, which is approximately an *additional* \$15 trillion short fall in Social Security, \$20 trillion in unfunded prescription drug benefits, and another \$75–\$100 trillion *plus* of unfunded Medicare liabilities (thanks to both Republicans and Democrats). Obviously, this number is *unsustainable* when considering the size of our economy is only about \$15 trillion of total GDP per year!

A more “macro” way of looking at this is: Federal, state and local governments throughout our nation spend about \$7 trillion dollars total, with an approximate additional \$3.5 to \$4.0 trillion of interest charges to serve that debt—and keep in mind, we're still growing the deficit at a rate of approximately \$1.5 to \$2.0 trillion per year. Currently, we collect approximately \$2.0 trillion a year in income, via payroll, investment, and corporate taxes. **YOU DO THE MATH!** The hard reality is, we can barely pay the *annual deficit* off with what we collect in taxes, let alone the annual interest charges of \$4 trillion per year, while keeping the government running on a balanced budget (which we don't have)! It's *impossible* at our present GDP level of \$15 trillion per year. Most everyone ignores these stunningly *monstrous* numbers because no one really understands them, or expects this debt to ever be paid—including those foreign nations who are carrying many of the United States' IOU's!

Is it any wonder then, why discussions about *replacing the dollar* as the world's standard currency are getting louder around the world? Presently, the United States continues to sell its treasury bonds, and has accumulated about \$4 trillion in foreign debt to other nations—China and Japan being the two largest debt holders, England being third, with the oil producing nations and Brazil being numbers four and five. Needless to say, this gives China (which holds approximately \$1.3 trillion of American treasuries—debt) a lot of political leverage to resist any American political, social, and/or military pressure they may not agree with. In other words, *China is positioned rather securely for influencing U.S. foreign policy.*

However, what many don't realize is the Federal Reserve retains the majority of debt in the United States. And every time the United States Congress wants to print more money, they (Congress) must agree to pay the Federal Reserve interest on those treasuries (money) and of course, pay out interest yields to foreign nations who buy those debt certificates (U.S. treasuries) as well. It should be obvious by now that this is a never ending cycle of *NATIONAL SLAVERY TO DEBT* FOR GENERATIONS TO COME that will not stop until essentially two very basic things occur: a) the U.S. Congress eliminates the Federal Reserve and regains control of the currency according to the U.S. Constitution, and b) the United States operates at all times within a balanced budget while initiating *brutal spending cuts*. I hope I'm wrong, but it doesn't appear the American people nor the present political leadership has the courage or appetite to make these hard choices and *embrace the austerity measures* necessary to correct the economic mistakes of the past 120 or so years.

Additional Considerations Proving Things Are Unprecedented

We sometimes fail to remember the decline of the United States is not due to the economics or weakness of the country's sociology—those are all just symptoms, effects, or axiomatic to a cause that most are blinded to because we have become so humanistic and politically correct within our “pop-culture.” Instead, what underscores our problems as a nation is, we have allowed our system to become *CORRUPT*, and not just in one area, but throughout the vast variety of our schools, institutions, and industries. It's a moral decay—a greed, an aspiration of power and celebrity, driven by varying degrees of narcissism—an internal decadence and degeneracy of dignity, integrity, and respect for each other that has infected us from the least and youngest, to the greatest and oldest among us. It's a *matter of the heart* of the American people. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

Decline, continued on next page



“Gay” Parade

Decline, from previous page

(Jeremiah 17:9). Also, God said through the prophet Hosea: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge [Why?]: because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you, that you shall be no priest to me: seeing you have forgotten the law of your God [that knowledge], I will also forget your children” (Hosea 4:6). This is a daunting thought and horrifying realization coming from God.

So often we forget the United States is *providential* in its placement in history. We *forget* it is a land of promise, affluence, and charity, with a focus on human and civil rights and personal freedoms, while ensconced in the values of Christ and the Old Testament. Most do not recognize the United States didn’t just happen by “dumb luck,” coincidence, or blind chance. No, quite the contrary, it is the *Providence of God* who was unconditionally committed to Abraham to be the recipient of a renowned land of material wealth and greatness (Genesis 12:1–3; 48:13–22; 49:22–26).

With that being said, we have *forgotten* as a nation that *we are responsible* to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to maintain the course and *abide in Him* in all His ways if we want to avoid destruction as a nation/culture. Perhaps this is why the *prophetic name* of the United States is *Manasseh*; after all, in Hebrew it means “FORGETFULNESS!”

Interestingly enough, Moses mentions this very issue of concern that he had with the *original* nation of Israel, which is very applicable for the United States today. Notice: “Beware that you *forget not* the LORD your God, in keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes... Lest when you have eaten and are full and have built goodly houses... and your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and you have multiplied; Then your heart be lifted up and you *forget* the LORD your God... And you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth. But you shall remember the LORD your God... And it shall be if you do at all *forget* the LORD your God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I *testify against you* this day that you shall *SURELY PERISH*” (Deuteronomy 8:11–20).

In the years leading up to and during the destruction of the original nation of Israel (the 10 northern tribes), prophet after prophet came upon the scene to warn Israel to repent and return to the Lord. Moses warned in both Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 (before Israel became a nation) that if they would “walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you...” *many blessings*. Notice, “rain in due season, the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit...I will give peace in the land... none shall make you afraid...you shall chase your enemies...five of you shall chase an hundred and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight...I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you...and I will walk among you, and will be your God and you shall be my people” (Leviticus 26:1–12).

However, if we as a nation adopting the God of Israel (which the United States has done) refuse to obey Him, notice what would happen. “But if you will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; and if you shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments...that you break my covenant...I will even appoint over you terror [including perhaps, actual terrorists?], consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart...you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you...I will break the pride of your power [military and financial weakness]...I will make your heaven as iron and earth as brass [pollution]; and your strength shall be spent in vain [we will waste our affluence]: for your land shall not yield her increase [famine and drought]...And I will bring a sword [war] upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant” (Leviticus 26:14–25). Read the rest of the chapter. It’s amazing what Moses warns Israel about and *how applicable his warnings are* to the United States and frankly, all of North America today!

In Deuteronomy 28 we find a similar listing of blessings and cursings as was given in Leviticus. After Moses lists the blessings if the nation would choose to obey (Deuteronomy 28:1–14), we come upon the cursings. “Cursed shall you be in the city [crime, gangs, drugs, civil unrest]...Cursed shall be the fruit of your body [abortion is a curse to the fruit—babies—of our women]...The Lord shall cause you to be smitten before your enemies...and shall be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth [destruction/captivity]... The stranger that is within you [Gentiles, foreign

nations/foreign nationals connected to the nation] shall get up above you very high; and you shall come down very low. He shall lend to you [buy up your debt] and you shall not lend to him [you shall be indebted to him]: he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail [you will be influenced and leveraged by the foreigner]” (Deuteronomy 28:15–44). Let me also encourage you to read this chapter. It is quite the *contemporary warning from God* to the nations He considered His birthrighted cultures—the United States and those associated with the British Commonwealth.

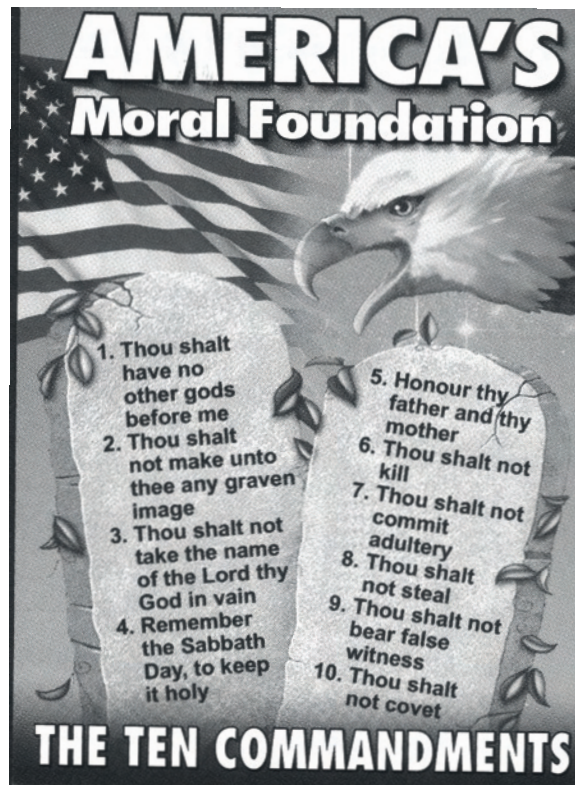
The voices of the *prophets*—their messages—are just as *contemporary today* for the United States and those nations of the birthrighted promises to *repent* and turn from their humanistic ways. Whether Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Hosea, or Micah, they all have their part in speaking to the people of North America and the Commonwealth countries—and heralding the time is upon us, things are coalescing and taking on increased threatening

positions. The Middle East is in flux, and a nuclear arms race is beginning to pick up momentum in that area of the world. The Muslim Brotherhood is growing in influence within many countries, including the United States—while the European Union struggles with the PIIGS countries and its currency, the euro. The winds of “change” are increasing and picking up velocity.

Everyday it seems anything can happen at any given moment. Yes, it is indeed quite different today because one thing is for sure: the United States is in obvious social and financial *decline*. Without a doubt, American culture is being redefined, and it *isn’t good*. *CONSIDER*: 45 million Americans receive food stamps (Ref. Congressional Budget Office), over 150 million Americans receive some kind of government service. Unemployment is in double digits for many states that are also running immense financial deficits. The United States has the dubious title of being the *largest debtor nation in the history of the world* and is *MATHEMATICALLY BANKRUPT!* It is paralyzed, having no ability to pay down its *current* debts, or unfund-

ed future liabilities. This has never happened before! We are in a *brand new* set of national circumstances—a *first* in the history of the United States! These are not normal times nor good signs! And sadly, for now, the Federal Reserve will continue to print more money at the request of the President and Congress. That will cause the debt to exponentially grow, generating the consequence of consigning future generations with prodigious amounts of debt. This will result in the continuation of debasing the value of the dollar, which will also weaken the military (national security) in like manner of ancient Rome—in other words, continuing to “spend its strength in vain.”

So what’s the solution? The culture of the United States needs the “children”—the people—to turn themselves back to the God of our fathers—not our *political* fathers, but Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If they would do this, it would lead them to understand *Jesus Christ is Who we need* to have as the central model for our nation, as well as Savior for our salvation. Otherwise, the United States, Canada, and many nations of the Commonwealth will *cease to exist* and He *will come* and smite the earth with a curse (Malachi 4:4–6)! Ω



God's Holy Days for 2012

- New Testament Passover: April 5, 2012*
- Feast of Unleavened Bread: April 7–13, 2012
- Pentecost: May 27, 2012
- Feast of Trumpets: September 17, 2012
- Day of Atonement: September 26, 2012
- Feast of Tabernacles: October 1-7, 2012
- Last Great Day: October 8, 2012

* Observed at sundown.

Feast Site information for the Feast of Tabernacles, 2012 will be posted as soon as details have been finalized.

Call or check back for updates at:
<http://cgi.org/holy-days/>

The Fear Factor

*How many of you remember the TV series, THE FEAR FACTOR?
What are some of your fears, and how can you overcome them?*

by Lloyd W. Cary



Lloyd W. Cary

FEAR FACTOR was a sports stunt/dare/reality game show originally aired between 2001 and 2006. The show pitted contestants against each other in a variety of stunts for a grand prize, usually \$50,000. The contestants were challenged to compete in a variety of aerial stunts, eating unimaginable abominations, and retrieval/transfer stunts under high stress and extremely adverse conditions. The show was introduced with a disclaimer such as, "I'm Joe Rogan, and this is *Fear Factor*. The stunts you are about to see were all designed and supervised by trained professionals. They are extremely dangerous and should not be attempted by anyone, anywhere, anytime!"

How about you? Have you ever been afraid—really afraid? Afraid for your physical life? For your spiritual life?

Fear is indeed, a *big* factor in our lives. Fear can be described as an emotion or passion excited by the expectation of EVIL. FEAR can cripple you, inhibit you, and paralyze you.

Of course, some fears are legitimate and may result in sickness, accident, or death. Common sense tells us we should not pet rattlesnakes, drive through school zones at 90 miles per hour, or leap off tall buildings like Superman. But far too many fears are imaginary, superstitious, and harmful.

Movies often revolve around protagonists who appear to be fearless, the way most of us would secretly *like* to be! Gang members ban together in false bravado, drawing pseudo street courage from one another—but often, when confronted alone, are fearful and cowardly.

Fear can affect your outlook on life, how you *relate* to other people, your job, your family, and even your spiritual life. People develop fears, phobias and personality disorders that result in real personality conflicts. Ask any psychiatrist! Fear can cause paranoia, anxiety, apprehension, and mistrust.

There is fear of persons, places, and things. Some are afraid of rats, cats, or bats, of snakes, or dogs. There is fear of heights, storms, claustrophobia, agoraphobia, aquaphobia, and even fear of the future. Think for a moment. What is *your* greatest fear?

Who among us has never feared nor been frightened? Even a newborn baby is confronted by a frightening array of new sights, sounds, and sensations; there is discomfort, change of temperature, environment, bright lights, strange sounds, and a whole new world of the unknown.

Every person on earth is afraid of something. Some fears are passed on by parents, teachers, peers, or other authorities. Other fears are personally acquired, perhaps through trial and error.

Mankind's Eight Greatest Fears

As a result of many studies about fear, it has been determined that man's eight greatest fears are:

1. **THE FEAR OF POVERTY.** This is an external fear often imposed upon us by society. Greed, gambling, and crime are frequently spin-off product of social fear—attempting to get something for nothing or fearing the loss of something you already have.

2. **THE FEAR OF ILL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL PAIN.** Some people fear to go to doctors or dentists for fear of hearing "bad news" or fear of pain and discomfort. They want to put off the inevitable, hoping that denial will postpone the inevitable. Others, hypochondriacs, fear *not* to flock to doctors at every sign of aches, pains, or imagined consequences.

3. **THE FEAR OF THE LOSS OF LOVE OF SOMEONE.** People naturally fear being abandoned or left alone. Blues and country-western songs abound with the theme, "My Baby Done Left Me." Pride, vanity, jealousy, and rivalry lead to



more and more dire consequences, often ranging from anger, becoming control-freaks, and even murder.

4. **THE FEAR OF LOSS OF LIBERTY.** Many conspiracy theories are founded in the fear of loss of liberty. Fear of "Big Brother" governmental takeover compels many to become survivalists who stock up on guns and supplies in fear of that dreaded day. Carried to extremes, paranoia rears its ugly head with disastrous results.

5. **THE FEAR OF OLD AGE** includes the first four points above, and more. The book of Ecclesiastes advises, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, 'I have no pleasure in them'" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). The proper fear of God is the chief antidote of vanity.

6. **THE FEAR OF DEATH.** Many biblically illiterate people wonder, "What will happen when I die? Will I go immediately to heaven, hell, purgatory, or will I just be annihilated?" (Request our booklet, *Lazarus and the Rich Man—Where Are They?* and our CD, *What Happens When You Die?* for the biblical answers.)

7. **THE FEAR OF CRITICISM.** Peer-fear, or fear of what others think of us, affects many of our habits and behaviors. Everyone wants to be well thought of and accepted by their friends and peers. Need proof? Notice how everyone changes the kinds of clothing they wear as new style changes come out from year to year. Many ladies would rather stay home than appear in public wearing last year's outdated clothing. A computer guru must have the latest software. A man will not wear a dress hat when baseball caps are "in." A gang member would just as soon die as appear in a coat and tie! They think dressing in their "gangsta" clothing makes them "in," "cool," and "free," but the truth is that they are conformists of the highest order. It is rightly said that even a dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a "live one" to swim against the current.

8. **THE FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING!** Some studies show that fear of public speaking is as great as the fear of death itself.

The word "FEAR" is used more than 400 times in the Bible with different shades of meaning. "AFRAID" is used 189 times, and "FEAR NOT," 63 times.

Fear of God

Many say the fear of God only means "reverence," and *sometimes*—depending on *context*—it does. But *most* of the time it is referring to alarm, terrible fright, dread, horror, or outright panic.

Most of the time when the word "fear" is used in the Old Testament, it is from a derivative of *yaw-ray'*, meaning: to be frightened, afraid, dreadful, and terrified. When God appeared to Israel, they *feared* and *trembled*!

Most of the time when the word "fear" is used in the *New Testament*, it is from a derivative of *phobeo*, from which we get our word "phobia."

In Leviticus 26:14–16, God tells us, "But if ye will *not* hearken unto Me, and will *not* do all these commandments... **I** [God] also will do this unto you; **I** will even appoint over you TERROR..." Do we see any terror in the world today?

Fear, continued on page 7

Fear, continued from previous page

The further we get from God, the more *terror* we will experience both individually and nationally.

We had *better* be afraid to disobey God—even in the smallest matters, such as the days we keep and the customs we observe! The Scripture tells us in Matthew 10:28, “And *fear not* them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul [the *psuche*, the spirit]: but rather *fear Him* which is able to destroy *both* soul and body in Gehenna fire!”

And yet God’s Word promises, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of *death*, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4).

God says in Deuteronomy 5:29, “O that there were such an *heart* in them, that they would FEAR [be afraid of], ME and *keep* all My commandments always, that it might be *well* with them, and with their children for ever!”

See what Jesus says about fear and worry *in your own Bible*. Find it in Matthew 6:25–34. You’ll find it most comforting.

Speaking of *evil* men, Romans 3:18 informs us that, “There is no FEAR [no *phobos*] of God before their eyes.” This is the problem with the world! “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed *speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Because people can disobey God and even blaspheme His Holy name, and He does not punish them immediately, they think they have “gotten away” with something and are emboldened to sin even further. But they do not consider, “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (see Ecclesiastes 12:14; Romans 2:16; 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Jude 14–15).

Of Judgment Day, we read, “But the FEARFUL [those who are afraid to encounter the possible dangers involved in the service of God], and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

Further, in Proverbs 9:10 we read, “The *fear* of the LORD is the *beginning* of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy [of God and His Word] is understanding.” Mankind, it seems, fears the wrong things.

Proper fear, respect, moral reverence, makes us *humble* before God. (See Proverbs 6:19–19 in your own Bible for seven things God absolutely *hates*!)

Fear? Fear What?



While a mythical Mother Nature gets the glory for God’s creation, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and earthquakes are called “acts of God.” Man willfully commits acts of murder, rape, lying, stealing, as he uses God’s name as a curse word, and people wonder why *God* allows it. An applicable acronym for WAR is “We Are Right”. Any country going to war has the conviction that it is in the right. Humanly speaking, we have many things to fear. Fear is, indeed, a factor in our everyday lives.

How Fear Works In Our Lives

1. **FEAR IS LIKE LEAVEN**, that eventually leavens the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6). Like an imaginary monster, it will take up shop and residence in your mind and continue to grow and grow and G-R-O-W as long as you feed it a healthy diet of doubt, worry, negative thoughts, and the illusion of being separated from God’s love. Feed your doubts and fears and your fears will grow. Feed your faith and your faith will grow.

2. **FEAR IS LIKE A BAD MARRIAGE**. Over time, fear will become your constant companion. You will become at-one-ment with it. It will literally change your entire personality for the worse. However, if you speak God’s Word aloud and command the fear to leave in the name of Jesus Christ, it will—it *must*—obey!

3. **FEAR IS LIKE A STEADY DIET OF UNCLEAN MEAT**—a poisonous meal over time. It becomes part of you. Fear can actually make you physically ill if you continue to digest or absorb it into your mind, body, and spirit. Living in constant fear can weaken you, prematurely age you, and even lead to an untimely death.

4. **FEAR IS LIKE A BULLY**. Like a school yard bully, fear enjoys intimidating and pursuing you. That is why running from fear—or going from fear to fear—does not solve the problem. It will dog you relentlessly as long as you flee from it. Call fear’s bluff and God’s Spirit working in you will do the rest. You must bravely determine to stop, turn around, take a stand, face fear head on, and claim your peace with God’s authority. You must be willing to fight the good fight even though relentless fearful thoughts may occasionally return for another round. “Submit yourselves

therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Believe it. Do it.

5. **FEAR IS LIKE A MAGICIAN’S TRICK**. It will deceive you, distract you, and distort reality as you see it. Satan is the master deceiver (Revelation 12:9). F.E.A.R. is an acronym for *False Evidence Appearing Real*. How true!

6. **FEAR IS LIKE A BOOGEY-MAN** waiting to jump out and catch you off guard when you least expect it. By leaning on the promises of God’s Word, learn we are to fear no one but God. “He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved” (Psalms 62:2).

There is no man courageous enough, no cache of weapons or supplies adequate enough, no circumstance great enough that can protect you more than our Father God! He omnipotent omnipresent, and omniscient. He is God!



Encouraging Words

The apostle Paul put it this way: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:37–39).

This list of experiences and persons which can’t separate us from God’s love in Christ was not just theory to Paul. It was, rather, living testimony from one who had personally survived assaults from these entities and emerged triumphant.

“He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved” (Psalms 62:2). God can protect you anytime, anywhere.

We asked earlier, *What do you fear?* What *should* you fear? Nothing but God Himself. Internalize these comforting words by the great warrior-king David as recorded in Psalm 27:1:

*The LORD is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?*

Romans 8:15 reassures us, “For ye [converted Christians] have *not* received the spirit of bondage again to FEAR [*phobos*]; but ye have received the Spirit of *adoption*, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” This is a *familial* spirit, a *loving* spirit, like that of a father to a son or daughter.

We are to come *boldly*—not fearfully—to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16)!

1 John 4:18 tells us, “There is *no fear* in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is *not* made perfect in love.”

In 1 Samuel 12:23, Moses said, “... God forbid that I should SIN against the LORD in ceasing to PRAY for you [Do you have *this* fear?]; but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear [*yaw-ray*] the LORD, and serve Him *in truth* with *all* your heart: for *consider* how great things He hath done for you.” God *expects* us to PRAY to Him! He expects us to ASSEMBLE together on His holy Sabbath (Hebrews 10:25)! Now *that’s* a *healthy* fear! A fear that we *should* have—fearing *not* to pray, and fearing *not* to study, fearing *not* to assemble together, and fearing *not* to love the brotherhood.

Understanding PROPHECY *correctly* helps cast out fear. In general—and often specifically—we can know what is going on in the world today before it happens. Prophecy is only history written in advance! Once informed, we need to learn to fearlessly cooperate with the inevitable. We worship a God of love, mercy, HOPE, and understanding (Romans 15:13).

1 John 3:21 says, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we CONFIDENCE [assurance, certainty, reliance] toward God.” That is, we should have great CONFIDENCE—the *OPPOSITE* OF FEAR—in God, knowing that He loves us and is looking out for us, and we have *no need* to fear as the world—who has *no hope*—fears (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

As Psalm 37:4–5 tells us, “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.”

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole *duty* of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

So the next time *you* are confronted by the *Fear Factors* of this world, remember that *we do not need to fear* as the world fears. So *follow* Him. *Cleave* to Him. *Believe* Him. *Trust* Him. *Reverence* Him. *Love* Him. *Delight* and delve into His Word.

The promises of God will give you REST—and *freedom*—from the *Fear Factor*!

What Is the Church of God International?

by John Coish

Who or what is the church Jesus built? Some will say the church consists of those who follow a certain man, whether he is the Pope or a supposed prophet.

Some would say, “Who cares? Churches are all about bondage, rules, and control.” Others think the church is about facilities or a fancy building.

Some would say the one true church is the people who keep true to the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong, Mohammed, or Moses.

Who do *we* say is the church?

We declare the Word of God is truth. There are probably a million reasons why the Bible should be declared the Word of God by all of humanity, but considering that this has been extensively covered elsewhere, we would like to acknowledge that the Church of God accepts this as the truth.

So how does the Word of God describe who the Church of God is?

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints” (Ephesians 1:13–15).

They are those who have been sealed by God’s Holy Spirit, or better yet, those who have God’s Spirit within them.

How do you get God’s Spirit, and what are the people like who get it?

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:38–40).

It takes a real desire to live one’s life according to the will of God, by seeking Him and applying His Word in your life as opposed to just doing what you *feel* is right.

“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that *obey* him” (Acts 5:32).

“Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:17).

Those first century Christians, the church, were constantly attacked by others as not being “good enough” at keeping the law, even though they taught people to obey. Jesus called the attackers a brood of vipers, hypocrites, and blind guides. “Even so ye also outwardly *appear* righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matthew 23:28).

Were there times that Christians, the church, did not keep the law and needed to be dealt with? Yes, the willful sinner needed to be dealt with. More often, though, the problem was that someone didn’t conform to Jewish tradition as opposed to being morally unlawful. The church as a whole seeks to obey God, which is why they have His holy spirit. They did not succumb to the myriad of personal judgments and rules others had added to the law, or were obsolete, and they still don’t today. It was to these selfishly motivated attacks that Jesus was blunt and aggressive. He was gentle to the multitudes, especially to the church. We should consider that.

The Bible identifies a Christian as one who has God’s Holy Spirit dwelling in him or her (Romans 8:9). *Who* does He give it to? Those who OBEY Him (Acts 5:32).

So what else identifies the church? “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which KEEP the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

The Bible tells us plainly that Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the body, not any other man, leader, or supposed prophet.

Christ’s body, His church, is described as those who are KEEPING the commandments—all ten, not a selective few. Some would protest that the

commandments are just a set of rules that take away your freedom, so why would you want to be part of a church like that?

When people make that comment, they are showing they are completely ignorant of history, human behaviour, and of Jesus Christ Himself. Anywhere biblical fundamentalism has flourished, freedom has flourished. Where other religions flourish, there is usually submission—either voluntary or otherwise. Where socialism flourishes, there is less freedom and more death. Why? Because the Word of God describes Christianity as freedom from sin and death. “But you have all those rules,” some protest. Yes we do, but *those* rules are fantastic, because they protect people. Would you want someone to steal from you, rape your wife, be envious, jealous? With modern day so-called sexual freedom, people have come under much bondage, disease, and problems that enslave people.

“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:18–19). Jesus said, “... Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34).

People who sin become slaves to sin just as a drug addict becomes addicted to his drugs. They are allured by a short-term “good feeling,” but ultimately are bound to a destructive behaviour.

Instead, we are free to be productive, godly, to put on the character of Christ—and *that* is what people should see when they see the church.

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.... But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular... But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 20–22, 27, 31).

If everyone really took to heart the concept that the church is the body of Christ, then there would be a lot less fighting in church and a whole lot more cooperation. The parts of the body *work together* to achieve things. Yet despite what function each has, if it is not done in *love*, it is useless. That is a picture of the church that God wants us to have and to be as a church.

The *Church of God International* does not claim to be the “one true church,” but a *part* of the one true church. It is, for the most part, a humble group of people *working together* as the body of Christ, to the best of our ability.

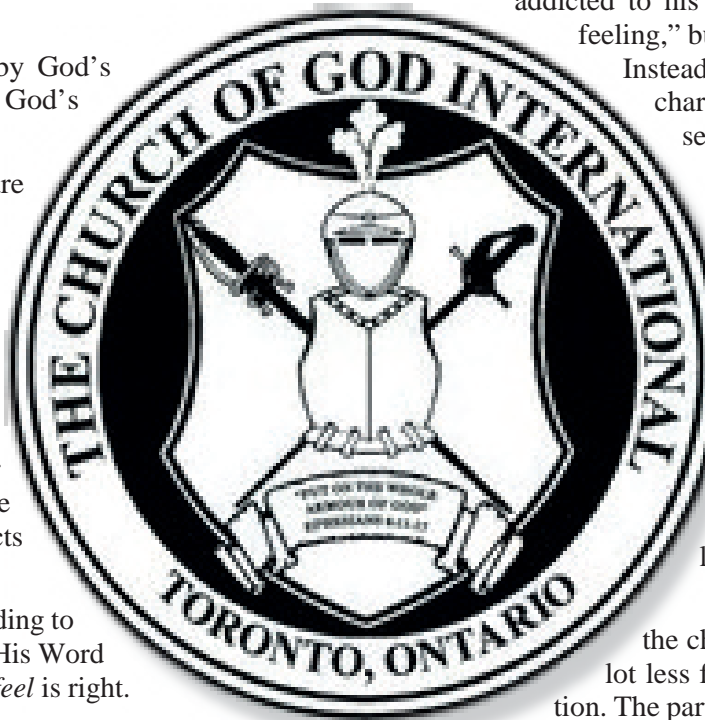
Why are we not the only true church? Firstly, God can call anyone He wants whenever and wherever He chooses without having to go through the CGI. He is *God*—we are but the disciples, learners, of Jesus. To say otherwise would be to presume to tell God what He must do. We do not hold to such arrogance or foolishness.

Secondly, anyone who hears the Word of God in this world need not turn to the CGI, *but to God alone* to repent. We hope they will join with us to be a part of a more effective body of Christ. They should join with some part of the body of Christ, and not be just a visitor, in order that they may give of themselves in supporting the body. Visitors generally are about receiving benefits and fellowship and not “doing” the work of the family.

Lastly, the body of Christ is supposed to be recognized by its humility, faith, and love. It is not to be recognized by arrogance, ego, and pompous self-righteousness. Many other sincere individuals believe in the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. If they do not keep them perfectly (as we see it or not), it isn’t as important as whether or not they have intent of heart to follow Jesus wherever He leads. This is not tolerance of sin, but an honest reflection that *none* of us are perfect, neither before nor after we were baptized. We do not therefore look down on others sincerely seeking the Lord.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (James 4:7–8).

You were not perfect when God called you, but you sought to follow Him, and adjusted your life to be pleasing to *Church*, continued on page 11



Our Church Culture

What makes the Church of God International different from other churches?

by John Coish

Many of the early members and ministers of the *Church of God International* had a strong desire to keep the commandments of God and hold onto the testimony of Jesus, but they wanted one more thing. They wanted a church that LOVED one another and LOVED the world enough to try to save it. That emotion and passion was something that many thought was missing in their prior church affiliation.

We usually have that passion for God and to reach out to serve others when we first see the world through God's eyes, but sometimes churches slowly cool that passion. We wanted it back again, and in a big way.

John 13:34–35 states, “A new commandment I give to you, that you *love* one another; as I have loved you, that you also *love* one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have *love* for one another.”

This is repeated more than a dozen times in the New Testament, so we ought to obey it; and most everyone recognizes that, but sometimes our processes can stifle the individual responsibility that God requires.

Many churches PAY all the local elders, and along the way most members start to expect the ministry to visit the sick, take care of the poor, etc. The members can easily begin to think they PAY the pastor to do those things. This can slowly lead to an environment where the members of the church pay and pray (even prayers are often left to the ministry) while the paid ministry does the rest. It is like God wanted us to complete everything through government instead of through individual responsibility.

When you examine the law, you will see repeatedly that it requires the *individual* to help in times of need, to reach out to the poor, stranger, and fatherless. It wasn't left for them to PAY the priest and forget about it. The same is true with the New Testament church.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

This idea of visiting wasn't left to the priests, apostles, or elders, but for the *church* to do. Compare this also with 1 Timothy 5:16: “If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.”

What did Paul mean, and who are the “widows indeed”? Paul thought the people in the church should take care of their own families, and not expect the church to take care of them. The widows the *church* would take care of were those who had no family to take care of them. In that case, the church should act like the family.

Look around your local church. Where there are big families and one gets sick or loses a job, the family should provide support for them. Part of honouring your parents is in supporting them if and when they are *unable* to support themselves. (This assumes the parents are doing their best to take care of themselves and their families all their lives. It does not mean parents are entitled to an early retirement on the backs of their children.) When you see a single person in the church, or a widow without family, or family that has neglected them, then this is where the church must step in and help—not just with money, but with *time*, *love*, and *comfort*. No one should be ill or dying without the comfort of loved ones around them, especially in the church. This isn't the job of the elder, but of the *church*.

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:1–10).

This was not said only to the elders of the church, but to the church as a whole. The church was told to comfort one another, exhort one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, and love one another. What are *you* doing?

In the *Church of God International*, we have very few full-time paid ministers; the vast majority are *volunteer* ministers, as was Paul. These volunteers give hundreds and thousands of hours per year to serve the church, but they do not do everything for the local church. They teach and expect the church to pray for one another, to help visit the sick and lonely, and to care for others as the need arises. The pastor may coordinate, teach, pray, and guide, but he will not do all of the service. It is a requirement for all parts of the body to be working properly for the body to function as intended.

There is another aspect of love that comes from this outward concern—it is *personal evangelism*. Since our inception in 1978, the members of the church have been urged to consider their lives and words as ambassadors for Christ. For instance, it is the parents' responsibility to teach and guide their children, not just to maturity or to a career, but to a life with Christ.

From cover to cover in the Bible, the calling of God went out through men and women of faith. This is why Isaiah said, “How shall they hear without a preacher” (Romans 10:14)? Who should preach and teach, and is that everyone's responsibility? There are different roles in the church, but yes, everyone to one degree or another is teaching by their lives, their deeds, and their words.

Romans 2 talks about the way of God being blasphemed by Jews who proclaim the law of God correctly but who do not follow it. Timothy is admonished to take care of his words and deeds that he may be saved, AND those who hear him.

Elders in the church, chosen for teaching and guiding the flock, must get their own personal, work, and family life in order to be able to teach the church. This is a great principle for us all. If you want to be effective in dealing with others, make sure you are a credible witness yourself. For example, you cannot teach others to be hardworking if you are lazy and always think others should take care of you as a kind of entitlement.

This type of personal accountability is missing in churches that hold to an extreme viewpoint on predestination. They believe God does it all, and you have no impact. This isn't what Paul believed, in that he sacrificed his life that *some* may believe.

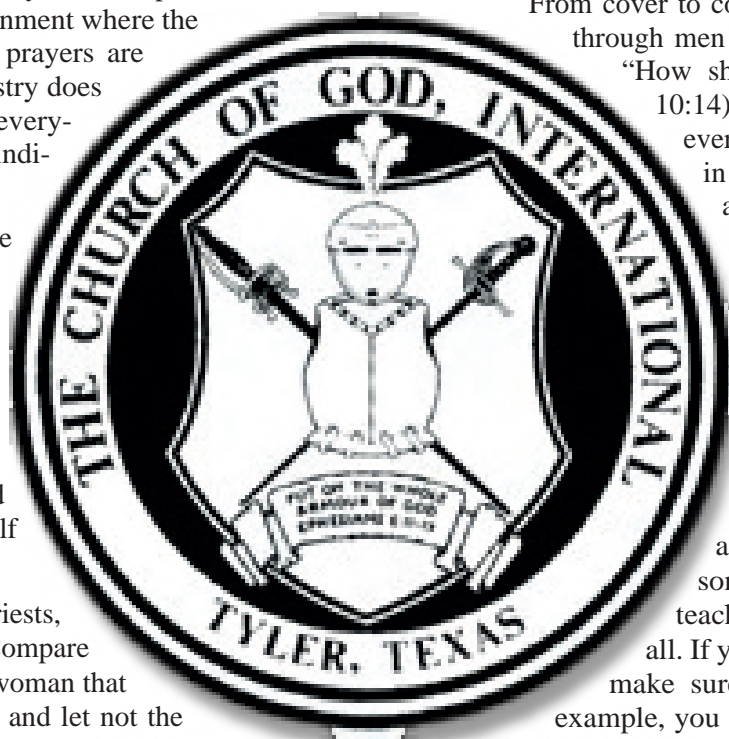
“For we must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences” (2 Corinthians 5:10–11).

Unfortunately, some believe they are not accountable to God for their actions today, and that they will have another chance later. There is a simple principle at play throughout the Bible: to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it will be accounted as sin (see James 4:17). The Word of God is not about telling people not to worry if you don't repent today. It is just the opposite. It is God pleading through his witnesses for mankind to *repent today*, for why will you die? (see Ezekiel 18:31).

All of the church, each of its parts, is about making all of mankind accountable for their actions before God TODAY! From the teaching of your children to the teaching of those who ask why you believe what you do, you leave them with a call to action—*choose life* (Deuteronomy 30:19)!

This church culture is summed up by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13—the love chapter. Without *love*, what does it matter what you know? Without love, what does it matter how much money you have? Love is the outpouring of concern for your family, your church, and your neighbour. It is the love of God pouring out of you in concern for others. It is not a tolerance for sin, but a tolerance to accept repentant, flawed men and women, and striving to exhort, comfort, and care for them for nothing in return. As such, this love is genuine, true, patient, humble, and kind.

Culture, continued on page 11



Obedience to God—Burden or Blessing?

Much has been said about God's Law, the Ten Commandments. "They're a curse," some maintain. "No, they're a blessing," say others. What does your Bible say?

by Lloyd W. Cary

What do you suppose is mankind's biggest complaint against God and the Bible? Go ahead—take a guess. It is basically that man does not want God—or anyone else, for that matter—to tell him what to do. To mankind, God's Law is a curse of conformity. We in the United States and Britain are not noted for our fondness of rules and regulations. Anything that even hints of restraints on our freedoms engenders instant hostility and opposition. Today's Gospel suggests that we're not alone in this aversion to being told what to do and how to live, no matter how gently or wisely it is done.

On the other hand, if you were God, what would be your biggest complaint about *man*? Undoubtedly, it would be man's constant attitude of rebellion—in short, *sin*. To our detriment, mankind refuses to believe, trust, or obey his Creator, as instructed in His Word, the Holy Bible. Shortly after giving the Ten Commandments, God lamented, "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, *that it might be well with them and with their children forever*" (Deuteronomy 5:29).

Statistics prove we live in a lawless and violent age that is rapidly becoming more lawless and more violent at time goes on. Moral standards, once held sacred, are being abandoned with impunity. Drug abuse, sex abuse, violence, murder, and rape plague our cities. Lawlessness is growing exponentially. People are becoming ungovernable, more and more of a law unto themselves. They want no restraints. We are witnessing the breakdown of our society!

An even more insidious trend is on the increase in the churches of Christendom. Here, too, we see lawlessness being preached and practiced. Literally *millions* of ministers and their congregations are now turning their backs on the Law of God, condoning behavior that only a few decades ago would have been openly condemned from the pulpit. God says, "A wonderful [astonishing] and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people LOVE to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jeremiah 5:30–31).

As David Kupelian wrote in his best seller, *The Marketing of Evil*, "The plain truth is that within the space of our lifetime, much of what Americans once almost universally abhorred has been packaged, perfumed, gift-wrapped, and sold to us as though it had great value. By skillfully playing on our deeply felt national values of fairness, generosity, and tolerance, these marketers have persuaded us to embrace as enlightened and noble that which all previous generations since America's founding regarded as grossly self-destructive—in a word, evil."

Today we see prominent church leaders openly attacking the Commandments of Almighty God. One judge said we should keep only the last six. On TV, in the press, on radio, and now on the Internet, self-appointed clerics, forecasters, and leaders openly *admit* to breaking God's laws, which have been held sacred since time began. Shocking sexual misbehavior, now openly flaunted as so-called "new understanding," "new freedom," and "new faith," actually mocks and dismisses the sacred Commandments of God! Millions of Christians believe they are now "above" or "exempt" from the Law! Christ prophesied, "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" (Matthew 7:22–23).

Strange as it may seem, this upsurge in immorality and lawlessness is not new. It has all happened before. There have always been rebels. What is new is the worldwide publicity lawless churchmen and theologians receive. Hardly a week passes but another "spiritual outlaw" is seen in the pulpit or on TV decrying the Commandments of God. Universities pride themselves on taking in believers and producing non-believers and atheists.

A World in Deception

Indeed, "And the great dragon... called the Devil, and Satan...deceiveth the whole world..." (Revelation 12:9). A deceived person doesn't *know* he is deceived. He is sincere—he believes he is right—or he wouldn't be deceived. But he is sincerely wrong.

Does it really matter how people behave in private or public? Does it matter what *you* do, say, or think when you feel no one is watching? Is it OK to be deceived as long as you are "sincere?" Do God's laws still exist, and are we expected to obey them? Or are God's commandments obsolete, fulfilled, and "done away with" by the death of His Son Jesus Christ? Millions of Christians would answer: *Yes, we are no longer under the Law. That was Old Testament stuff! We're under grace! The Law has been done away with and we are no longer expected to keep it.*

"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the *curse* devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate" (Isaiah 24:5).

"Her prophets unstable—men of treachery, Her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have violated the law" (Zephaniah 3:4, *YOUNG'S LITERAL TRANSLATION*).

"Its priests have wronged My law, And they pollute My holy things, Between holy and common they have not made separation, And between the unclean and the clean they have not made known, And from my sabbaths they have hidden their eyes, And I am pierced in their midst" (Ezekiel 22:26, *YLT*).

False teachers contrast "grace" and "law" as though they are opposites and we must choose one or the other. Is this true? Does being "under grace" cancel the need to obey the Ten Commandments? How you answer this fundamental question will reveal how you behave and how you will stand in the fast-approaching Day of Judgment. According to Jesus Christ, you will have to answer for all your actions—yes, for every idle word on that awesome day. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

Continuing, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12). Think about this: *If* there is no law or no works, *why* would anyone have to *answer* for their behavior?

Who, What Is Really to Blame?

Many agnostics and atheists blame "religion" for most of the world's ills. I, for one, have never seen "religion" kill anyone, blow up a building, or snuff out the life of an unborn child in its mother's womb. *People* kill people. *People* start wars. *People* commit crimes and make mistakes. Through the influence of *false* religion, people with a distorted, narrow-minded, intolerant, and perverted sense of right and wrong cause many of the world's woes. Conversely, what would it be like to be born into a world with *no* concept of right or wrong, good or evil, hate or love, with no moral values or absolutes? Would the world be better, or worse?

The problem is that everyone thinks his or her own personal belief system is the TRUTH.

Many excuse themselves by *blaming God!* "If there is a God in heaven," they reason, "and if He is almighty, and has a loving and compassionate heart, then why doesn't He stop the suffering that is in the world today? Why doesn't He use His limitless power to put an end to the sorrows that fill the hearts of so many people? If God is loving and good, why does He allow pain, suffering, and death? If He is all knowing, and all powerful, why doesn't He step in and put a stop to all the crime, disease, upset weather, warfare, and foolishness we see all around us?"

The plain and simple answer is: God is not causing all these things—*man* is! How? Read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 in your own Bible. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them," God says, and then goes on to list a series of BLESSINGS for obedience (Leviticus 26:3–13). "But if ye will *not* hearken unto Me, and will not do all these commandments," God continues, and then lists the CURSES that disobedient man will bring upon himself (Leviticus 26:14–39). Did you catch it? This is where the "curse" of the law come in—it is for *breaking*, not *keeping* God's laws!

Jesus said, "... if thou wilt enter into life, *keep* the commandments" (Matthew 19:17).

Disobeying the Laws of God—the laws that say you shall not kill, commit adultery, lie, cheat, steal, and covet, are the very *same* laws that tell us not to have any false gods or images before Him, not to bow down before idols, take His holy name in vain or disregard His Sabbaths. Christianity is not a buffet where you can pick and choose what you want and disregard the rest.

Think for a moment! It's a "no-brainer!" How difficult is it *not* to lie, cheat, steal, covet, kill, and commit adultery? Just don't do it. Wouldn't you want your friends, relatives, and neighbors around you to keep these commandments? Of course you would! And the whole world would be better off if everyone kept them.

God Requires Obedience

No one can read the Bible through without becoming strongly aware that the Almighty God of Israel re-

Obedience, continued on next page

Obedience continued from previous page

quires the human race to OBEY Him. Indeed, without obedience, a person's worship of the Creator is worthless. "But *in vain* they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of *men*" (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7, *emphasis added throughout*).

Doubtless it is Christendom's greatest error that so many church leaders have somehow convinced themselves and others that the *Ten Commandments* are cancelled or somehow done away with. Some vehemently *hate* God (John 7:7; 15:18). Some even go so far as to call His Laws *The Terrible Ten!* A greater misconception can hardly be imagined. God's Laws are His love-gift to mankind, showing him how to live.

What is *wrong* with obeying God? Name it if you can. Law breaking—both man's laws and God's—is filling prisons with criminals too numerous to deal with. The fact is, the Scriptures contain literally dozens and dozens of passages in which God appeals to the sinner (the lawbreaker) to consciously turn back from the ways of disobedience and death to the path of obedience and life. The Bible calls it "repentance." Faithful obedience is the opposite of sin (an old-fashioned word meaning disobedience). "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for *SIN IS* [Bible definition] THE TRANSGRESSION [or breaking] OF THE LAW" (1 John 3:4).

Obedience, if examined closely, is in fact an *expression of faith*. Obedience proves that faith is alive! "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20). Love and obedience are the only reliable signs that a believer loves and walks with God. Bible prophecy indicates that in the last days the entire world is going to be tested on the matter of obedience. Once again, as in the days of old, the choice will be between the Commandments of God and the traditions of men. "For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of *men*" (Mark 7:8).

Further, God wants obedience with a good attitude, not a begrudging, "Oh well, OK—if I *have* to!"

Beware of "Scripture-Busters"

God commands His true servants, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isaiah 58:1)! But there are those who would tell us, "See not," and "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (see Isaiah 30:10). Beware of the smooth sounding arguments put forward by misguided preachers and false prophets who claim it is no longer necessary to obey the Ten Commandments. Beware of those preachers who substitute clever sounding stories for the straight-from-the-shoulder Word of God. Beware of those who attempt to break the Scripture by turning it against itself. Many, for example, will take some of the sayings of Paul and try to convince people that the Law is "done away" and "nailed to the cross." Nothing could be further from the truth. Christ said, "The scripture *cannot* be broken" (John 10:35). God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son require all their followers to obey the Law, a fact that is borne out by the writings of all the prophets of God and repeatedly attested by the lives of holy men and women down through the ages. We would be miserably failing in our duties—nay, we would be *sinning!*—if we led you to believe anything else.

The Ten Commandments are, and will continue to be, the "constitution" of the Millennium—the "World Tomorrow" after Christ's return to earth. They spell out in plain language how we humans should behave. They define right and wrong—or in Bible terms, righteousness and sin. As much as we humans value our intelligence and freedom, no earthly parliament, congress, senate, cabinet or legal body is qualified to legislate on moral issues. Moral issues are the domain of God Almighty. Only *He* has the moral stature, the knowledge, the wisdom, and the authority to legislate on human morals. Parliaments have for generations tried to make moral laws that would bring peace and prosperity to their people. But they have all miserably failed. "The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace" (Isaiah 59:8).

God warns, "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Man's interests are primarily selfish, our judgments are faulty, and our experience limited. Only God can define good moral behavior—behavior that will produce peace, happiness, and prosperity on earth. God's Word is mankind's "instruction manual" for the benefit of the human race. The Ten Commandments define right and wrong moral principles and actions, on which hang the other spiritual laws absolutely essential to the welfare of the human race.

Jesus had the final say. He said, "Think *not* that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am *not* come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in *no* wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall *do* and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17–19).

The TEN COMMANDMENTS are recorded in Exodus, chapter 20. Go there. *Read* them. *Memorize* them. *Obey* them.

A Curse or a Blessing?

The truth is, God's laws are necessary. They identify sin. They convert the soul (Psalm 19:7). They act like signposts or schoolmasters, pointing the way to the Savior, Jesus Christ. Without God's Law, no one would know right from wrong. God's Laws are all perfect—every one of them.

God's Laws are eternal. The high level principles they embody will be inscribed on the true believer's mind and will be instinctively obeyed throughout eternity.

Clearly, God's Laws are not a curse or a burden, as some people think, but were designed to bring blessings!

For further study, read all of Psalm 119 and the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew, chapters 5 through 7. In these majestic passages, the values and obligations of obedience are magnified and presented in their true perspective. Study them carefully, and by God's grace endeavor to put them into practice. Do not make the mistake of following the advice of misguided leaders who are blindly leading millions into error.

For a much fuller understanding of these matters, be sure to request our free booklets, *The Ten Commandments; How To Be a Real Christian; The Book of Galatians Commentary; and Paul and The Law—Understanding the Hard Sayings*. Ω

Church, continued from page 8

Him, as you went along the way. That is what we want from our children, and that is what God our Father wants from us.

Be a part of the one true church—the church that Jesus built. Be a part of the ministry of the *Church of God International*—to be a blessing to others, as together we do more than we can do independently. Ω

Reprinted from our website at <http://www.cgicanada.org/who-is-the-church-of-god/#more-4459>

Be sure to send for our booklets, *The Church That Jesus Built* and *How to Be a Real Christian*; and our CDs, *Many are Called, Few Are Chosen* and *What Does God Require?* All our materials are absolutely free, as per Matthew 10:8.

Culture continued from page 9

It is the fruit of the Spirit that God wanted His body, His church, to be known by (Matthew 7:20). It is the love that seeks the well being of others today.

The Church of God International has ministers who are not above the church looking down, but among the church, serving as they are able, and through the talents that God has bestowed upon them. They do this as examples to the church with the hope and expectation that all parts of the church seek to edify and glorify one another and work together to reconcile the world.

Personally, we declare our faith by our actions. Collectively, we seek to display the love of God in a warning and witness, and in a home of love and prayer. May God bless this effort! Ω

What *Else* is Different?

The Church of God International has AN OPEN CHURCH POLICY!

We have many people attending who are new in the faith. We do not "screen" anyone to see if they are "good enough" to attend Sabbath services. We are *all* recovering sinners in need of grace.

Please be aware that some may not always keep each of God's laws as they should, and some may not believe everything we teach. We pray that they may be strengthened through the services we render and the examples we set as they come to a closer walk with their God. We request that you be neither judgmental nor base your standard for obedience on what you see your brother do. Christ is our standard, not weak and sinful men or women. Always remember that you will be judged for what you do, not what others do. Your calling is to pray for them, set the right example, and please God our Father and Jesus Christ in all that we think, say, and do. Ω

For a deeper understanding of these matters, we suggest you request our FREE booklets: *How To Study Your Bible* and *Needed, A Rational Approach to Bible Prophecy*.

Church News

Jamaica CGI Women's Retreat – 2012

The CGI of Kingston, Jamaica Women's Ministry held their third Annual Retreat on Sunday, February 12, 2012 at the enchanting Hope Botanical Gardens, where the atmosphere was very warm and inviting. We had 42 persons in attendance, including a number of our young adults.



We commenced the day's event with a very stimulating icebreaker, which gave each participant an opportunity to express appreciation, compliment, or give a token to the person whose name they had previously drawn. This exercise proved

very interesting, as some persons expressed their emotions as they listened to what others had to say about them. The general feedback indicated that everyone found the exercise very worthwhile, as it gave persons the opportunity to learn something about others with whom they do not interact very closely. We thank sister Judith Foster for introducing this new concept which we will adopt for future events.

We discussed topics relevant to women and their health, money management, dating and relationships, and Christian modesty.

Our first presenter was guest speaker Dr. Cherie Tulloch, who spoke on the topic of "Women and Their Health." She began by reminding us of how beautifully and wonderfully we were made by our Creator. She brought to our awareness the different types of cancers which affect women at various ages, and encouraged us both to have regular check-ups and self examinations, and to practice good and healthy lifestyle behaviours.



Our second presenter was Kimberly Ramocan, who spoke on the topic of "Dating and Relationships." She used the analogy of the Tabernacle, which is symbolic of the body (the temple of God), to help us understand the importance of preserving ourselves for marriage. Her illustrations were very powerful and profound; the holy of holies (the presence of God) represents

the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; the inner court represents the heart and mind (being one with God); and the outer court represents the physical body which should be kept pure and undefiled. She also shared with us her personal testimony of how she and her husband Eluid were able to preserve themselves for each other, which has resulted in the love and respect they now enjoy.

After we had a scrumptious lunch and rich fellowship, our third presenters, deaconesses Stacy Hall and Tanesha Henry, spoke on the matter of "Money Management." Deaconess Hall emphasized the importance of making wise financial choices and being good stewards of our finances. She developed a five-step plan: 1) Financial Assessment, 2) Goal Setting, 3)

Development of Plan, 4) Implementation of Plan, and 5) Monitoring of Plan. She also encouraged us to be virtuous women who make wise investments.

Tanesha Henry dealt with the importance of having a budget and the success principles which can help us build the necessary discipline. She further spoke of the importance of saving for future goals and emergencies, and not just spending all our resources. She also gave us useful tips on how to save on a low income.



The fourth and final presenter was deaconess Myrtle Barton, who spoke on the topic of "Christian Modesty." This being the most controversial topic, some persons were very forceful in expressing their views.

Deaconess Barton began by defining modesty and explaining that there are factors such as culture, religion, climatic conditions, occasion, generational differences, etc., which make the topic more complex. She also explained that modesty is more pronounced in female fashion, especially clothing, and justified her point by explaining that this is so because the female physique is more alluring. She also spent some time explaining that the way some women dress can cause men to lust because they are stimulated by sight, and are always attracted to women physically before they are connected emotionally.

She shared with the group the results of a survey which she conducted with men (mostly non-Christians) which revealed that men expect a different standard from Christian women, as they believe we should be the light of the world.

The session became very interactive when some of our young women modeled different styles of formal and informal clothing, while the group critiqued what was appropriate and what was inappropriate. After much debate, most persons agreed that some forms of dressing were inappropriate for Christians.

In a brief comment on men's fashion, deaconess Barton said that men should avoid wearing clothes or dressing in ways that will stigmatize or stereotype them, using Deuteronomy 22:5 to justify her point.

Deaconess Barton ended by encouraging everyone, especially the older women, to dress attractively and fashionably, yet conservatively and not to dress in ways that will attract attention to ourselves for the wrong reasons. We should lead by example and do all things decently and orderly.

The day's session was very enlightening and enriching, and based on the evaluation done by the participants, the executives of the Women's Ministry were satisfied that our objectives were accomplished.

Ω



Submitted by Myrtle Barton

Do You Have Cable TV?

Many people wonder: What can **I** do to help further the Gospel?

You—yes, ONE PERSON—can make a difference preaching the precious Gospel of the Kingdom to the world! (See Matthew 28:19–20.)

If you have a local cable television provider, check with them to see if they have a "public access" or "community" channel. If so, they may be able to broadcast our program, *The Armor of God*, locally—perhaps even **FREE**!!

All it would entail is *you* relaying DVD copies of the program regularly, in advance, to their offices. For more information, contact Ann Alpert at info@cgi.org

Watch Sabbath Services Live On Your Computer!

You are invited to attend church services in Tyler, TX via the Internet. We invite you to tune in Saturdays:

Tyler, TX, 12:00 Noon, EST at www.cgi.org

Simply go to our website and look for the link to "Live Webcasting." Best results are achieved with a high-speed Internet connection. *Please be patient and be prepared to "retry the link" until you connect.*

Coming Soon! Sermon Transcripts on line.



Church News

Great Turnout For Bible Lecture Campaign in Ottawa May 11–12, 2012

Mr. Bill Watson's message was entitled "A Prophetic Warning From the Voice of Ezekiel." Ezekiel understood that Israel would be a divided kingdom between the House of Judah to the south (its capital Jerusalem), and the House of Israel to the north (its capital Samaria). They will be reunited at Christ's return, when David will be resurrected and made king over them. This event will have a tremendous effect on the world.

Twelve new people attended the two-day Bible lecture. An unexpected five percent response to such an event sponsored by CGI was gratifying. We surpassed the usual three percent average response.

The guests enjoyed Bill's message and were extremely pleased with the one-on-one fellowship afterwards with Bill and the church members. Two of the guests expressed an interest in seeking counseling for baptism and attending with us on a regular basis. All in all, it was a resounding success. Thanks and praise be to God!

Ω

Submitted by Bob Dagenais

Visit Us On the Web!

Log on to www.cgi.org and...

- Visit our newly updated website!
- Subscribe to the *Infuse* and *Prevail* magazines, *The Armor of God* periodical, and *The International News*! Or download them directly to your computer.
- Listen to or view past editions of the *A armor of God* program!
- View our CGI webcasts and our archives.
- Keep up to date with our CGI blogs.
- See our *Sabbath Keeping Youth* activities.
- Download lessons of our *Home Bible Study Course* or send for a hard copy.
- Download iTunes hymns from our hymnal.
- Read the Bible online in over 25 versions and in many languages, including the Hebrew and Greek.
- Peruse our online literature library!
- Make prayer requests!
- Find local church congregations using unique scalable maps.

With more to come!

In loving memory...

Tom Flake 1929–2012



Tom Flake was a loyal member of the *Church of God International*, Indianapolis, Indiana congregation. Tom came into the Church of God back in the early 1960s. That was the time I first met Tom and his family.

Tom was one of the greatest perfectionists I ever knew. He certainly exercised the Scripture. "What ever the hand finds to do, do it with your might." If Tom was building a cabinet, or digging a hole in the yard, or planting a garden, he wanted it done to perfection, and he lived his life in the same manner. I talked with Tom just a few days before he died, and he said he was ready to go and that we would meet in the Kingdom.

He is survived by his wife Betty, his son Mike, and his three daughters, Cinda, Lorna, and Myra. He also left eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. He was a dedicated Christian, and dedicated to his family and friends. All who knew him will miss him. Tom died at age 82 from a long battle with cancer.

Ω

Submitted by Ferrell Vincent

What in the World is God Doing?

God's Seasonal Plan Reveals All!

Don't you find it *strange* that for all mankind's fascination with the spiritual realm, he seems to **deliberately overlook** the rich typology seen in God's annual Sabbaths given to ancient Israel? Ironically, the mind of God is revealed in them. You owe it to yourself and your loved ones to find out!

Be sure to send for our free literature, *God's Seasonal Plan* and *The Fall Festivals*. If you are new to God's holydays, you'll be enlightened and amazed! If you are familiar with them, you will be given even deeper understanding.

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Church News

CGI Jamaica Breaks Own Records in 2012



Glenford Smith

The Jamaica congregation of the CGI has continued in 2012 to remain unwaveringly focused on its *raison d'être*—spreading the Gospel to increasing numbers of people in all parts of the island. In only the first four months of the year, it has held two campaigns, with record attendances of 410 and 352 in January and April, respectively.

410 Attend January Campaign at Church of Christ

In January, Pastor Ian Boyne addressed the biggest ever campaign audience by a Jamaican Church of God minister on the subject of the Sabbath. His strategy of debating Church of Christ elder Mr Leslie Buckland at a Church of Christ assembly hall in Kingston succeeded in attracting 340 visitors, with 70 CGI brethren present.

110 Visitors at Sagicor Campaign in April

In April, intense promotional efforts resulted in attracting 110 visitors, the highest visitor turnout at the congregation's Sagicor meeting hall, in Kingston. There were also 242 members who supported this highly engaging campaign on the subject of "Postmortem Salvation," or the "Doctrine of Second Chance," as it is popularly called.

Gleaner Newspaper Media Blitz

In addition to lecture style campaigns, the CGI Jamaica initiated a public advertisement media campaign series in April. This included editorial styled ads in the island's most widely circulated and read newspaper, *The Sunday Gleaner*. The topics in this series included "Resurrection or Immortal Soul?" and "There is No Ever Burning Hell!"

Pattern of Growth Continues

The fruits of this unrelenting focus on evangelism continued to be evident, with four new persons being baptized during the Passover season. Needless to say, the consistent numerical growth in its membership and regular Sabbath service and holyday attendances continued to be a source of encouragement and determination for both leadership and laity to continue with their obviously effective church growth model.

For instance, in Kingston alone, 176 members took the Passover, while the Feast of Unleavened Bread recorded attendances of 274 and 309 for the First and Last Day services, respectively.

Sabbath Not Abolished

In his debate with Mr Leslie Buckland, Mr Boyne strategically employed Scripture, scholarship, and ineluctable logic to refute the anti-Sabbath arguments of his opponent and the mostly Sunday-keeping audience. He interacted with Mr Buckland's best arguments to prove the falsity of the view that there is no requirement under the New Covenant to keep the seventh-day Sabbath and that it was abolished along with the Old Covenant.

He established the pre-Sinaitic antecedents of the Sabbath, showing that its existence and relevance were not necessarily tied to existence of the Old Covenant. He also showed scholarly evidence for the view that Hebrews 4 gave support to the continuing relevance of, and requirement for, literal Sabbath keeping.

Recognizing the limited time opportunity for the debate, Mr Boyne also seized the opportunity to distribute CD recordings of a two-hour Sabbath lecture he had done. Both members of the Church of Christ and independent visitors enthusiastically accepted the offerings.

In Defense of God's Love and Justice

During his presentation in April on "Postmortem Salvation," Mr. Boyne resolutely and surgically refuted the claim that a just and loving God would eternally condemn people for rejecting Him, when they had never heard the Gospel, through no fault of their own. He also showed from Scripture that God had one standard for saving people, and it included knowing and accepting the truth of Jesus and the Gospel.

He showed from Matthew 11:20–24 and Ezekiel 16:53–57 that, though God punished pagan nations, He will provide an opportunity for them in the future to learn and follow His ways. He also showed from Romans 9–11 that God still has a plan to fully restore Israel after Christ returns. How could this be possible

without Israel getting a chance after this life? Mr. Boyne also questioned how a just God could restore wicked Israel and condemn people who lived more righteously than they, but who did not know about Him, through no fault of their own.

Mr. Boyne exegeted Romans 10 to show that explicit faith in Christ through knowledge of the true Gospel is required for salvation. He showed that theologian Karl Rahner's views of "implicit faith" through general revelation and salvation through good works are not scriptural.

The Work Continues

A follow-up campaign was held on Pentecost. We invited 40 persons who left their names for follow-up contact. As many as 30 persons turned up to hear the presentation on the necessity of the special calling, the purpose of the Firstfruits Festival (Pentecost) and God's time periods of salvation.

Ω

Submitted by Glenford Smith



Ian Boyne

Infuse Retreat: Auburndale, Florida

Please join us in Auburndale, Florida for our annual Infuse retreat. The retreat runs from July 11–14. The theme for this year's retreat is "Let Your Light Shine." The retreat will kick off the night of July 11, with an Infuse meeting at the Auburndale church building at 7 PM. On July 12, everyone will get together for an activity (bowling, swimming/water park are options) during the day, and dinner at a restaurant at night. On July 13, we will have a full day of activities. Two seminars will take place in the morning and two in the afternoon, with a little music and dinner thrown in. Saturday will also provide us with two more seminars in the morning and afternoon, plus a church service in between. We will end things with a meeting that evening. Sunday will be a good-bye breakfast.

The hotel where we will be staying is the Auburndale Best Western. If you plan to attend, we have a reduced rate of \$89 per room. Just let them know you are with the *Church of God International* to get that rate. The hotel is located at 1008 US Highway 92 W, Auburndale, Florida, 33823. The phone number to the hotel is 863–551–3400. The hotel also offers a free breakfast. The church building is 3.7 miles from the hotel. The address of the church building is: 553 East Bridgers Avenue, Auburndale, Florida.

If you need a ride to the hotel from the airport, please touch base with Mike James at mhjames6043@yahoo.com or call him at 240–304–6798. If you need assistance in getting to the retreat or staying at the hotel, please contact Mike.

Ω

Submitted by Mike James

What's going on in your local Church area? Combined services? Public Bible studies? Pot-lucks? Church activities? Celebrations? Memorials? Visiting ministers? Birth or death announcements? Plans for getting *The Armor of God* on a free Public Access television station in your area? Let us know, and perhaps we will publish it under "Church News." We'd love to hear from you!

The editor

Notice: The next deadline for submissions to the *International News* is August 15, 2012.

Church News

Pastor Bronson James' Appreciation Weekend and Dinner March 17–18, 2012



Myra and Bronson James

The local Detroit fellowship group has been blessed to have Elder Bronson T. James as their resident pastor for several years. During this time we were taught how relevant the Bible is today, and how there is nothing new that hasn't been addressed before. Every situation you might find yourself in today has already been lived by someone else and has been recorded for our instruction. He makes Scripture come alive in the local "street" language of today.

However, time marches on, and he is entering a new phase of his service, which requires him to leave the Detroit area; and our MAP trainee, Steve Sandy, decided they should show their appreciation for all Bronson has done for them by honoring him with an appreciation dinner.

This required a great deal of planning and co-operation from all the members of our group. The first problem to be addressed was, "How do we keep it local?" We managed to do that by inviting only those who served this group at some time or another.

The Sabbath service was led by Deacon George Gibson. We then had our usual praise and worship, followed by the intercessory prayer.

The children, under the guidance of Dr. Anika Hanson, demonstrated how they are able to remember Scripture by association. Deaconess Loretta Jasper played an accordion solo, then accompanied the Thatcher children, with Logan playing guitar and Jaydon performing vocal. The selections included *Whispering Hope* and *Peace in the Valley*.

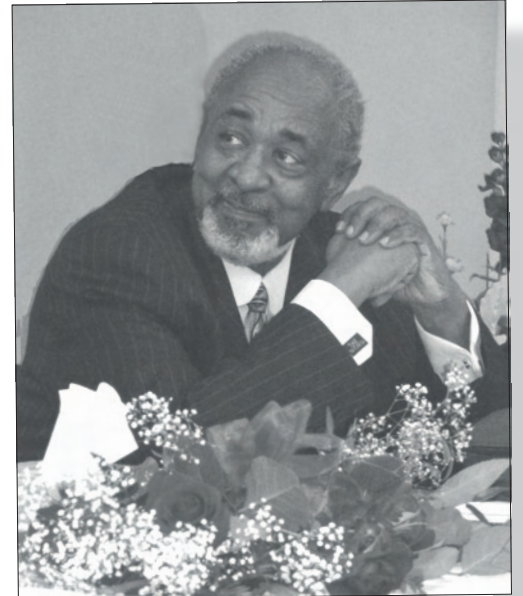
Elder Bronson James delivered the sermon, and the service came to a close.

A fellowship hour followed with a variety of light luncheon foods, desserts, and beverages being served, while old acquaintances were renewed.

The next day, Sunday, a catered "Appreciation Dinner" was held with over 70 people in attendance. The meal was tasty and plentiful (chicken, beef, potatoes, green beans, salad, rolls, and cake)—makes you want to do it again!

The hall was set up and tastefully decorated with beautiful flowers. Pastor and Mrs. James and Mr. and Mrs. Sandy were seated at the head table.

The ceremonies were opened with Herbert Hanson welcoming everyone. Since he has heard so much about our beginnings with a small television screen in place of a live speaker, he felt compelled to show us that very TV which has been, thankfully, in storage for several years now. We certainly have improved, as we now have two, large flat screens at our disposal, an excellent sound system, and live speakers at each service.



Trophy presented to Bronson James

We were uplifted by the wonderful singing voices of Marie Allen, Shea and Jasmine Smith (accompanied by Marie Allen and Noel Scoburgh), Joyce Smith, Charlene Bradley, and Andra Sandy.

Deacon George Gibson and Deaconesses Wanda Horton, Marilyn Dunn, and Loretta Jasper each spoke a few words, and then Pastor James was presented with a stunning trophy featuring a world globe covered in gold, complemented with rich wood tones to signify that he is part of a worldwide effort. The inscription was inspired by Steve Sandy and reflected the years of service we have been blessed with. Deaconess Marilyn Dunn closed the ceremonies with prayer.

Then the "paparazzi" came out in full force with a variety of cameras—large, small, zooming, motion, flashing, etc. It was entertaining to see them vying for position, trying to get the very best shot possible.

As all good things must come to an end, finally it was time to go. There were many fond farewells as we dispersed—tired, but happy!

Best wishes to Elder Bronson T. James as he relocates to Tennessee, and to Steve Sandy as he tries on those shoes. Ω

Submitted by Steve Sandy



Loretta Jasper with grandchildren Jaydon and Logan Thatcher



Loretta Jasper, Bronson James, Steve Sandy, and Lee Jasper

The Church of God International Is a Very *Different* Church of God Organization

by John Coish

This title probably means little to people who have never heard of the “Church of God International” before. Many people have mistakenly thought *all* churches of God are the same. In some ways we are. We are very much like other Church of God groups in that we stress the Bible, the commandments, and the testimony of Jesus.

But in some ways we are not. I was personally there at our first Feast conference, and most of the nearly 1,000 people gathered were there because of doctrinal reasons. This is something others do not want to admit, because it implies that the old *Worldwide Church of God* had doctrinal problems. And it did. This is the main reason we are not like many other Church of God organizations.

Nearly all of the other Church of God organizations want to carry on “the work of Herbert W. Armstrong.” Many people (and some leaders in these organizations) talk about Herbert Armstrong in an idolatrous fashion. Most people who attend CGI are thankful for the work that H.W.A. did in teaching the authority of the Bible, the law of God, and the appreciation of God’s Sabbaths, but we do *not* hold him up as the “Pope” or as a biblical prophet of God.

Additionally, the people who came out of the *Worldwide Church of God* to begin the CGI sincerely believed there were some policies or teachings that NEEDED to be corrected. This is why 1,000 people came quickly together in forming the CGI.

We have never agreed with the following theories:

- one and only true church organization
- one apostle—or the “primacy of Peter” principle
- rigid authoritarian church government
- church eras
- a physical place of safety as it was taught

We have also never agreed with the approach of hyper-judgment of others outside the church or judging others in the church to be “clean or unclean” with man’s rules, or “yardstick” religion. For example, if a man’s hair was an inch “too long” in the estimation of the minister, the man would be told to NOT COME BACK if it’s not cut! Other issues were make-up, divorce and remarriage, etc..

These rules were hypocritical, since the *Worldwide Church of God* would make fun of *other* “man-made rules,” such as denominations who taught “no dancing allowed,” but enforced many of the same type of strict rules themselves.

In this issue of the *International News*, I have written two simple articles to highlight how the teachings of the *Church of God International* are different from the teachings that were held by the *Worldwide Church of God* and Herbert W. Armstrong. We believe these CGI policies and teachings are balanced, scriptural, and a better path for the Church of God, rather than holding onto “old error” as a maudlin display of loyalty to the memory of Herbert Armstrong. HWA taught us to follow *Christ* (and the leading of the Holy Spirit)—not a man—and he oft spoke of Paul’s admonition to “prove all things.” We are not seeking to erode anyone’s faith—we must have a BIBLE reason for everything we do and believe. The *Church of God International* has a plethora of detailed doctrinal sermons, articles, and CDs for further study—study on any subject that interests you. See our renewed website at www.cgi.org to see for yourself.

Read on to discover if there is a better way forward to a more balanced and more “spiritually mature” Church of God, comprising members who *read* and *think* and *grow* as God reveals and as He leads *all* who are truly His. Ω



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