



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The Official Newspaper of the Church of God International

Vol. 35, No. 1

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

Spring 2014

Be A Light!

by Adrian Davis



Adrian Davis

When we gather together on God's holydays, we are spiritually rejuvenated and filled with the inspiration of God's Word. God pours His presence into His holydays and fellowships with us in profound ways. These days are centered around the activities that occur during the agricultural cycle. Consequently, as there is no agricultural activity during the winter, none of God's holydays occur during the winter months.

The Long, Cold Stretch

There is a long and cold stretch between the Last Great Day and the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Some brethren find this long stretch challenging. Especially when, coincidentally, this period is the height of pagan celebrations. One of the biggest celebrations in this period is Christmas. While this celebration is portrayed as Christian, people of all faiths (and those of no faith at all) celebrate it—not only in the Western world, but all over the world. According to Matthew Stefon*, the religious editor at *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

"Early Christians did not celebrate His birth, and no one knows on which date Jesus was actually born."

"In the 3rd century, the Roman Empire, which at the time had not adopted Christianity, celebrated the birth of the Unconquered Sun (Sol Invictus) on December 25th—this holiday not only marked the return of longer days after the winter solstice, but also followed the popular Roman festival called the Saturnalia (during which people feasted and exchanged gifts)."

"As the church in Rome only formally celebrated December 25th in 336 during the reign of the emperor Constantine, who made Christianity the effective religion of the empire, some have speculated that choosing this date had the political motive of weakening the established pagan celebrations."

With a little effort, anyone can prove that the early church observed God's holydays and not the festivals our modern world accepts as Christian. Many of us, however, can feel alienated when we are the sole voice in our families and social circles choosing not to participate in their customs.

God Has a Plan

Take heart! One day, the whole world will observe God's festivals!

"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain" (Zechariah 14:16–17).

Contrary to popular Christian belief, God is not trying to save the whole world now. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15 that God's salvation occurs in stages. The spring holydays reveal that God is only working with a handful of humanity now. We are referred to as the firstfruits, or the spring harvest. The fall holydays reveal the rest of mankind will have their opportunity for salvation later, after Christ's return. As firstfruits, we will have the distinct privilege of working alongside Jesus Christ to harvest the rest of mankind. We must learn God's ways now so that we can teach them when Christ returns.

Don't Be Discouraged!

This is no time to feel discouraged or alienated. Be careful also not to feel superior or to come across as arrogant. Don't be abrasive. We are not better than anyone. In fact, we are probably worse. Paul taught that God calls the

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Hold Fast to God's Word

by Murray Palmatier



Murray Palmatier

With 2013 now in our collective rearview mirror, we have made it through another of this world's holiday celebrations. As followers of the Bible, this time of year is always a challenging one, as we are surrounded by the various trappings of the season. Whether it be with family or friends, at school or the workplace, it seems that we just cannot escape the holiday revelry.

Is It In the Bible?

What has always astounded me is the number of people who believe that the story of Christmas is biblically accurate. In 2013, *The Christian Institute* completed a survey of 2000 Britons and discovered that:

- 12 percent think the Bible features Father Christmas.
- 84 percent believe that THREE kings visited Jesus.
- 10 percent think that Santa Claus appeared at Jesus' birth.
- 7 percent believe Christmas trees are approved by the Bible.

Truth, a relic of the past?

As readers of the Bible, these statistics are hard for us to believe. Yet, when the study of God's Word takes a back seat to other tasks, it does not take long for human beings to forget simple truths. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul pointedly told them how he was "astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to another gospel" (Galatians 1:6, ESV).

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weak and base, not the wise and powerful, so that no flesh should glory. All glory is God's for His infinite love and wisdom. Our whole lives must be defined by the love of God, not human pride.

Remember God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Don't let peer pressure or feelings of alienation cause you to compromise your faith. Remember Jesus Christ was shunned and alienated for living and teaching God's truth. Like Him, let's be a light in this dark world. Let's develop the love of Christ for all men.

Press Toward the Mark

Be patient. Be loving. Let people speak well of you even if they don't agree with you. One day they will understand. For now, we must be patient and keep our eyes focused on our profound calling and the hope of the first resurrection. Like Paul, we must say,

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:10-14). Ω

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Take Heed

We find ourselves living in a world where truth has become a relic of the past. Isaiah's prophetic words have come true when he warned "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20, ESV). This is why time and again, the writers to the New Testament Church consistently pointed God's people back to His Word. A sampling of such instructions include:

- "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away" (Hebrews 2:1, NKJV).
- "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, and knowing from whom you have learned them..." (2 Timothy 3:14, NKJV).
- "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it" (Revelation 1:3, NKJV).
- "These [Bereans] were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11, NKJV).

Only One Source for Truth

In this age of social media, the ease with which we can receive information is mind-numbing. For all of the good the copious amounts of knowledge we have access to brings us, we must never forget that we have only *ONE SOURCE* for truth—God's Word.

We receive biblical knowledge from various sources: sermons at church services, magazine articles, books and pamphlets, Internet readings and videos, and in-person interaction, to name just a few.

IN ALL CASES, we should follow the example of the Bereans and cross-reference what we hear against the pages of Scripture. The writer of Hebrews provides a very clear reason for this instruction: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 2:1, NKJV).

God's Word is our *ONE* and *TRUE SOURCE* of truth. Sermons, books, pamphlets, blogs, and even "revelations from God" to individuals *MAY* be helpful. But we accept them as *TRUTH* only after we "search the scriptures...to find out whether [they are] so." When we do that, we will never become part of a growing crowd that just assumes they know what truth is without taking the time to search the Scriptures to validate what we hear. Ω



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THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS 3900 TIMMS ST., TYLER, TX 75701

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Editor-In-Chief: Vance A. Stinson

Editor: Lloyd W. Cary

Contributing Writers: Lloyd Cary, Adrian Davis, Vivian Hall, Murray Palmatier, George Ramocan, Bill Russ, Horane Smith, Vance Stinson, and to the many contributors who made this publication possible, *thank you*.

Production: Lloyd W. Cary

Chief Executive Officer: Charles E. Groce

Business Manager: Benny Sharp

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OVERSEAS OFFICES:

- Australia: Minister, Herb Haupt: The Church of God International, PO Box 171, Boonah, Queensland 4310, Australia
- Canada: Minister, John Coish: The Church of God International, 900 Oxford St., PO Box 33034, London, Ontario, Canada N5Y 5A1
- Jamaica: Minister, Ian Boyne: The Church of God International, 60 Cairncurran Ave., Western Dist. PO, St Andrew, Kingston, Jamaica
- Philippines: Minister, Rene Corpuz: The Church of God International, 7 Opal St., Severina Subdiv, KM 18 South Superhighway, Paranaque, Metro Manila, Philippines. Email: rene@cgiphils.org

CGI Website: www.cgi.org
CGI E-mail: info@cgi.org
Phone: 903-939-2929

Q&A's on Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

WHAT ABOUT PASSOVER?

Q I am writing to find out some information about your church....Regarding the day [do you observe a specific day?] in which you drink wine and eat bread? Can you tell me what this day is called, and do you also do the washing of feet at this service. Also, do you have to be a baptized member in order to attend? *K.R., Victoria, B.C., Canada*

A Once each year, baptized members of the Church of God take a little piece of unleavened bread and a small serving of wine as symbols of Christ's shed blood and broken body in the annual "Passover" service. We do it in the evening of the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month of Nisan (March-April), which is the night Christ gave His disciples bread and wine and instructed them concerning the commemoration of His death. In addition to taking the bread and wine as emblems of Christ's body and blood, we follow Christ's example by washing each other's feet. Anyone can attend the service, but only baptized persons should partake of the bread and wine. (This year we will be commemorating Christ's self-sacrifice on the evening of April 13.) Read Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:14–20; John 13:1–17; 1 Corinthians 11:23–29. (See page 20 for help on keeping the Passover.)

SHOULD WE USE LEAVENED BREAD AT PASSOVER?

Q It is my understanding that the Greek word *artos* always refers to leavened bread, while the word *azumos* means unleavened bread. The New Testament says that Christ gave His disciples *artos* at the Last Supper. Why, then, does the Church of God International use unleavened bread at the Passover service? [paraphrased and condensed] *R. G., Beeville, TX*

A The word *artos* is not limited to the definition "leavened bread." It can refer to bread of *any* kind, including the unleavened variety. The LXX (the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament, dating from before Christ) sometimes uses the term *artos* in texts that speak of the bread that was used during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Having determined that the term can refer to any kind of bread, the next step is to determine which kind of bread best represents Christ. Since the memorial of His self-sacrifice is rooted in the ancient Passover/Unleavened Bread festival, and since leavening (in relation to the spring festival) is associated with sin (1 Corinthians 5:7–8), our conclusion is that unleavened bread is a most fitting symbol of the sinless Savior.

ARE WE SUPPOSED TO WASH EACH OTHER'S FEET?

Q Jesus washed His disciples' feet, but He said that this was an *example* for us, but didn't mean that we are actually supposed to wash each other's feet as a part of a religious ceremony. He was, through His example, showing us that we ought to be humble, and should help and serve each other. If He said that we should actually wash each other's feet, then I would have no problem with that. But He doesn't. He just says that He set an *example* for us. Besides, since there is no practical purpose for washing *someone else's feet today as there was in those days, doing it would not have much meaning*. Don't you agree? [Paraphrased] *Sent by e-mail from Florida*

A No, I do not. Jesus was surely setting an example for us, as He plainly says in John 13:15, but it seems that you and I do not fully agree on the meaning of "example." True, Jesus' act of washing His disciples' feet was an illustration of the life of humility to which He was calling them, but it was also an example of what to do. This comes across clearly in the text:

"So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an *example*, that you should *do* as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you *do* them'" (John 13:12–17).

Jesus washed the feet of His disciples on the night of His betrayal, the same night He instituted the commemoration of His self-sacrifice, and said plainly that they should follow His example and do what He did—that they "ought to wash one another's feet." The language here is too strong to be reduced to a mere metaphor. Therefore we take Jesus' instructions literally. We strive to have a "foot-washing attitude" throughout the year, but we literally stoop down and wash each other's feet at the Passover service each year. It was deeply meaningful when Jesus did it, and if Christ is living in us through the Holy Spirit, then it should be deeply meaningful when we do it, as well. The fact that we don't have servants who greet our guests and wash their feet as they enter our homes doesn't make this act any less a symbol of humility.

WHO KILLED JESUS?

Q Who killed Jesus? Was it the Jews or the Gentiles? [Condensed, paraphrased] *R. S., Summersville, WV*

A Certainly the Jewish religious leadership played a part in bringing about His crucifixion, as did Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' own disciples; and the Romans actually carried out the execution. These facts are made clear in all the Gospel accounts of the last 24 hours of Christ's earthly life. So both Jews and Gentiles were involved in killing Jesus. As the prayer recorded in Acts 4 states, "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You appointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together..." (verse 27).

DID CHRIST DIE FOR ALL?

Q Do the spiritual benefits of Christ's shed blood apply to everyone or only the elect? And does it erase all past, present, and future sins? [Paraphrased] *J. L., La Paz, Iloilo City, Philippines*

A The redemptive work of Jesus Christ is sufficient for the entire human race, but it applies only to those who receive it according to God's stipulations. This is the clear teaching of John 3:16–17: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." This tells us that Christ died for the sins of the "world"—everyone—but only those who "believe in Him" (accept God's provisions for salvation) receive everlasting life.

Sins of the past are sins we have committed; sins of the present are sins we are committing; and sins of the future do not exist. So does the blood of Christ erase all past, present, and future sins? No. It erases only past sins; but to erase those sins, it must be applied. That's where faith comes in. Present sins are forgiven only when we stop committing them (repentance) and trust in Christ to blot them out (faith). But by then they are past sins. The point is that the blood of Christ does not cover deliberate sins that are in progress. It covers only those sins that are no longer in progress because the sinner has repented of his sinful behavior. This is precisely what the book of Hebrews tells us: "For if we sin willfully [that is, if we return to a life of habitual sin] after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26–27). A person who, once cleansed from his sins by the blood of Christ, turns back to his former transgressions, plunging headlong into a life of sinful practices, "has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace" (verse 29). These are all "future sins"—that is, sins committed at some point after initial conversion. They are clearly not covered by the blood of Christ. But keep in mind that this passage refers to a state of mind in which repentance is not possible. The person cannot repent because he *will* not repent. However, anytime a Christian who has fallen into sin truly repents, forgiveness will most certainly follow. He can rest assured he has not committed the unpardonable sin.

W

God's Holydays 2014

New Testament Passover
April 13, 2014 (Observed at sundown)

Feast of Unleavened Bread
April 15–21, 2014

Pentecost
June 8, 2014

Feast of Trumpets
September 25, 2014

Day of Atonement
October 4, 2014

Feast of Tabernacles
October 9–15, 2014

Last Great Day
October 16, 2014

Holydays are observed beginning sundown the previous evening and end at sundown on the days listed. Passover is observed at sundown on the day listed.

Download the *Holy Day Calendar 2012–2017*
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The Origin of Man

by Bill Russ



Bill Russ

The Bible teaches that God created the many life forms we see on this planet. Yet, man, in his rebellion against the Creator God, has looked for alternative reasons for the existence of life. In this vast universe, there is no proof that physical life exists anywhere except on our home planet earth. The evidence we presently have tends to support the view that we are alone in the universe. Unfortunately, atheists and agnostics lean on their own understanding, ignoring or rejecting the Bi-

ble's warning against such behavior.

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6; NKJV throughout unless otherwise noted).

We understand the attitudes taken by the world to disavow any knowledge at all of God and intelligent design. But what is the understanding of the church? Less than 100 years ago, the controversy between evolution and the origin of man came up again. Then, as now, the proponents of evolution were declared the winner because religion (Christianity, that is) could not answer the simple question, "Who did Cain marry?" In the year 1925, in the small town of Dayton, Tennessee, a schoolteacher by the name of John

Thomas Scopes was accused of violating Tennessee's Butler Act*, making it unlawful to teach human evolution in any state-funded school. This has become known as the "Scopes Trial," pitting Darwin's theory of evolution against the Bible on the true origin of man. An eight-day trial ensued, and the question that the witness for the prosecution could not answer (that became the turning point of the trial) pertained to Cain's wife.

Most Christians today would consider the early 1900s a time of great understanding of the Bible and the precepts of the Creator God. We believe we have departed greatly from the mindset of the people of that time. This was only 90 years or so ago, and there are some who are still alive today who were born at the time of the trial in Dayton, Tennessee. We believe we have deteriorated—and we have—from our beliefs on the origin and history of humankind.

Nashville, Tennessee, the capital of the state, is sometimes referred to as the "Protestant Vatican." It's a city with over 700 churches, several seminaries, and a number of Christian schools, colleges, and universities. Many people say that not only is Tennessee in the Bible belt, but it is the *buckle* of the belt. With the town of Dayton just 150 miles or so to the southeast of this Christian city of Nashville, this question of whom it was Cain married should have been on the lips of most of the citizens who lived there.

How have we fared in recent history dealing with the perplexing question (perplexing only in the minds of those who do not understand Holy Scripture) of who Cain married? Are we better able to answer today than we were 90-odd years ago? According to the ones who believe in the theory of evolution, we should be better able to give an answer, for evolutionists claim man is evolving to be vastly superior, especially intellectually—so, by their own reasoning, we should be smarter than we were 90 years ago.

In 1985, the agnostic Carl Sagan (who was probably an atheist), in the book *Contact*, asked the same question that the prosecution's witness in the trial back in 1925 could not answer. No one in 1985 could, or would, answer Carl Sagan when he asked this same question. If man is evolving to be vastly superior through mutations and natural selection, how can this be explained?

In *Contact*, Sagan said the following: "If God is omnipotent and omniscient, why didn't he start the universe out in the first place so it would come out the way he wants? Why's he constantly repairing and complaining? No, there's one thing the Bible makes clear: The biblical God is a sloppy manufacturer. He's not good at design; he's not good at execution. He'd be out of business, if there was any competition."

This reminds me of a saying we have in the South: It is better to be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt. As Proverbs 17:28 says, "Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive."

*The Butler Act was a 1925 Tennessee law prohibiting public school teachers from denying the biblical account of man's origin. It was enacted as Tennessee Code Annotated Title 49 (Education) Section 1922, having been signed into law by Tennessee governor Austin Peay. The law also prevented the teaching of the evolution of man from what it referred to as lower orders of animals in place of the biblical account.

God is not constantly repairing His creation. Most scientists agree that the universe is winding down; no new material is being added; all radioactive isotopes are becoming less radioactive when left alone. There is no evidence that the universe is in a constant state of repair. The biggest fear of most scientists who are atheist or at the very least agnostic is that the universe will continue to expand until the stars have exhausted all of their fuel and nuclear fusion has ceased; thus, the entire universe, after many eons of time, will reach absolute zero, where even magnetism cannot exist.

In the last century, there have been no greater icons in Christianity than Pope John Paul II and Billy Graham. They, too, believed in some concepts of evolution.

A great many educated men think more of their intelligence and faith in a dead concept than to believe in a Creator God who brought this universe into being out of nothing. Yet, with all their intelligence, they do not believe what is shown to them using their senses.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts [minds] were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things" (Romans 1:18-23).

**So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God created He him;
male and female created He them.
(Genesis 1:27)**

Billy Graham said, "I don't think that there's any conflict at all between science today and the Scriptures. I think that we have misinterpreted the Scriptures [why not believe we have misinterpreted science?] many times and we've tried to make the Scriptures say things they weren't meant to say. I think that we have made a mistake by thinking the Bible is a scientific book. The Bible is not a book of science. The Bible is a book of Redemption, and of course I accept the Creation story. I believe that God did create the universe. I believe that God created man, and whether it came by an evolutionary process and at a certain point He took this person or being and made him a living soul or not, does not change the fact that God did create man.... whichever way God did it makes no difference as to what man is and man's relationship to God" (*Billy Graham: Personal Thoughts of a Public Man*, 1997, p. 72-74).

To believe in a combination of evolution and creation is a contradiction of terms; it's either one or the other! The Bible says that God created the heavens and the earth, and on the sixth day of (re)creation, He created man. Evolutionists claim that, given enough time, anything is possible. I ask, Where did the concept of time come from? Is not time a law? God "has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus **before time began**" (2 Timothy 1:9).

I agree that the Bible is not a book of science, but true science cannot disprove the Bible. The conflict comes from not understanding the Holy Scriptures. If I were going to time a 1963 Corvette, I would not look to the Bible for answers on how to do that. I would look at an automobile book on the subject. While the Bible is not a book of science, scientists could have been far more advanced if they had understood the Scriptures. How many years was it that man believed the world was flat, and that if you sailed too far out into the ocean you would fall off the earth? Yet, an ancient book of Scripture tells us that God "sits above the **circle of the earth**, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers" (Isaiah 40:22). So much for false scientific endeavors.

The Christian religion that was at odds with true science was the Roman Catholic Church (the Protestant churches came out of the Roman Catholic Church and still hold many of her concepts). During one period of time when the Roman church held sway over Europe, known as the Dark Ages, the church tried to keep the people ignorant, for they were easier to control, and many during that time who disagreed with the church were treated as heretics and promptly put to death.

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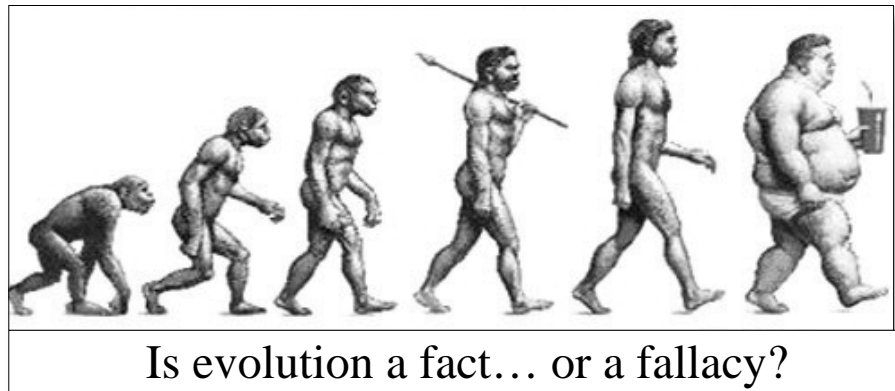
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I have a lot of respect for Billy Graham, but it is disappointing to me that he thinks God used anything that resembles evolution to bring forth humanity, or anything in creation.

If we would carefully read the book of Genesis and look up the words that are spelled out dealing with the creation of man, we can come to know that man is a living soul. Nowhere does the Bible describe man as having an *immortal* soul. Immortality is a free gift, not something we already possess. “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28–29).

To say or believe that evolution had anything at all to do with the existence of man makes God out to be a liar. The Bible has no value at all if God is a liar.

When we look at the theory of evolution, it leads to many important questions without an answer. A helium atom explodes, bringing into existence all the elements that make up the universe. Where did the helium atom come from? Ancient alien theorists believe aliens from “somewhere out there” seeded the earth with intelligent life. Where did the aliens come from? We have another unknown. Their answers provide more questions than answers. I guess we have another helium atom. Rather than believe the sure Word of God, they hold to concepts that make no sense and are too full of holes. Man was made in the image of God and in His likeness, or he came about through a series of haphazard events of which there is no proof at all. This brings us to the question, what is this life all about? I will not give an answer to this dilemma now. Just study your Bible; the answer is in Scripture. Read our booklet, *Man’s Awesome Destiny*.



Billy Graham is not the only one within the boundaries of Christianity who has erred greatly on the side of science. Pope John Paul II also favored the concept of man developing through an evolutionary process until God, at a certain point in man’s evolutionary development, gave this being a human soul. On October 22, 1996, in a speech to the *Pontifical Academy of Sciences* plenary session at the Vatican, Pope John Paul II said of evolution that “this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers, following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge. The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favor of this theory.” Although generally accepting the theory of evolution, John Paul II made one major exception—the human soul. “If the human body has its origin in living material which pre-exists it, the spiritual soul is immediately created by God.” This is like believing evolution fashioned the car in your driveway, but you had to come up with the key. You took a work that was 99 percent finished, and all you had to do was add the finishing touch.

Scientists do not want this universe to come to a dark and frigid end. They cannot find enough mass in the entire universe to slow down and eventually stop its expansion and then begin to contract until gravity causes it to collapse into a helium atom again. Then, with a little luck (and a few billion years after another “big bang”), man will once again crawl out of some primordial soup and life will start all over again. No hereafter; dead is eternally dead. Man, it seems, would rather have no existence into the future than to believe the Word of God.

For this “oscillating universe” theory to work, there has to be more mass than we can observe in the universe, so scientists came up with “dark matter.” This is a theory that, like evolution, cannot be proven. Likewise, we are issued a challenge to disprove a theory that is based on nothing more than conjecture.

My Bible plainly says that God created man, both male and female, in His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:27–28). This does not allow any room at all for the false theory of evolution. The Bible does not say God found a primate He could use for His purpose by installing a soul in it. We live in a society that is controlled by a fallen angel, Satan, who is a great deceiver and has ministers who masquerade as ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14–15).

Creation or evolution—you decide. Ω

I Know the Way Out!

by Vivian Hall



Vivian Hall

There was a man who went exploring in a remote and not very safe area. Carelessly, the man stumbled and fell into a deep, frightening hole. After the shock, panic set in and he began to cry out loudly for help.

An engineer happened by and heard the man. He went over to the mouth of the hole and proceeded to give the desperate man all the dimensions and calculations that related to the hole. That did not really help. The man continued to cry out begging for help as the engineer went on his way. A doctor was not far away. The doctor went to the hole and proceeded to tell the man the possible injuries and wrote him a prescription, as doctors are known to do. The doctor tossed the prescription into the hole and suggested the man get it filled soon. The doctor went on his way. The man in the hole screamed in frustration, and with the last of his energy loudly begged for help again. Wonder of wonders, the man’s friend of many years heard him. The friend rushed to the hole and jumped in. The man looked at his friend in dismay. He said, “You fool! Now we are both trapped in this deep hole.” Calmly, his friend looked at the man and answered him. In a confident voice, the friend said to him, “I know the way out. You see, I’ve been in this hole before.”

A careful review of Scripture teaches us the very same thing about famous names in the Bible. They knew the way out. The way out is simple. It is total reliance upon our Creator God.

- Noah knew that he did not know what to do in the rain and rising flood.
- Joshua knew the walls of Jericho could not be climbed.
- Moses knew Pharaoh was harsh and deadly.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego knew the fire of the furnace would consume them.

They knew reliance on God was their way out.

Some of us have been there. We, too, have fallen into the hole. Have you? Do you know the way out?

Do You Know?

*Do you know where to go or what to do, when no options are open to you?
What do you do? What do you say? Can you make your troubles go away?
Or will you hurry to your knees, asking God to help you please?
Then, can you change—your actions, your outlook, everything?
Is that impossible for you to do? That is the very best way out! True!*

Ω

Sentence Sermons

- People cannot change truth, but the truth can change people.
- If truth stands in your way, you’re headed in the wrong direction.
- Most folks would rather have one soul-satisfying emotion in a sermon than a dozen Bible facts.
- The Bible is not just true—it is “*the Truth*”.
- I read my Bible to know what people *ought* to do, and my newspaper to know what they *are* doing.
- The Bible doesn’t need to be rewritten—just reread.
- The Bible is the only book whose Author is always present when it is read.
- When you do what you please, does what you do please God?
- Satan has reserved seats for you in many churches across the land.
- What kind of church would you have if every member were just like you?
- Jesus put the church in the world—the devil put the world in the church.
- People do not miss church because they live too far from services—it is because they live too far from God.
- God’s ear lies very close to the believer’s lips.
- If you can’t sleep at night, don’t count sheep—talk to the Shepherd.

A Dialogue With An Atheist

*An atheist needs lots of blind faith.
All a Bible believer needs is eyes that see and a brain that works!*

by Lloyd W. Cary



Lloyd W. Cary

Prelude: This is admittedly a rather unusual article. In fact, most of it a transcript from online discussions this author recently had with an atheist, whom I shall hitherto refer to as “Atheist X” to protect his pseudo-identity. It was written purposely in “tongue-in-cheek” style to expose the limitations of Atheist X’s reasoning. Upon sharing parts of this dialogue with a few friends, the author was encouraged to put this discussion into article form to display how emboldened atheists have become in spite of the facts and perhaps give you a point or two on some ways to answer them.

It all began a short time ago as I was perusing books online and clicked a “like” on an author’s book who strongly preferred creationism over evolution. Shortly thereafter I saw several posts that a man we shall designate as “Atheist X” directed to dozens of other bloggers who also recommended the book.

Below are a few excerpts, slightly edited and sanitized, from Atheist X:

- Mr. _____ [the author, a Bible-believer] is a “professional liar, hatemonger, hypocrite, bigot, tax evader, fraudulent video editor, witch doctor, and all-around ignoramus.”
- “When you see [the author] and he denies that he is an ape, point out that by his ‘they’re still just X’ argument, he has scapulae and hair follicles and a liver and jaws and an autonomic nervous system just like a chimp, and if he’s going to deny the evolved differences, he’s still just a chimpanzee. He’s still got a spine, just like a fish, so he’s still just a fish. And he’s bilaterally symmetric, just like a worm, so he’s still just a worm.”
- “Atheists are open to the existence of a god. Let’s take *your* god, for example. The New Testament repeatedly and consistently states that believers will receive what they pray for in clear, unequivocal terms.... Simply pray to your god, and tell him to manifest himself as a reply in this comment section. If I see a reply from a Yahweh or Jehovah with clear indication that the message is from a deity, I’ll believe.”
- “For those already duped by the ‘Evolution vs. God’ mentality, I would recommend reading any grade school science textbook, consulting any elementary school science teacher, and beginning the process of rudimentary science education. Better yet, start reading and studying the Bible—after all, that’s how most people become atheists.”
- “Finally, this ‘god-defender’ goes on to demonstrate his total lack of understanding of his own Bible. He asserts that Christ saves by faith alone, proving he has not read or at least does not understand James 2:14–26 in its original context. He also claims that God cannot lie, proving he has not read or at least does not understand 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12 in its original context. Predictably, he concludes with the oft-cited Romans 1:22—paying no mind to the fact that the author of this passage is actually referring to first-century Greco-Roman polytheists, not atheists (and certainly not evolutionary biologists).”

There were many more such demeaning, scoffing, insulting replies, belittling and making fun of believers with their supposed “greater intellect.” Unfortunately, all too many professing Christians are ill-equipped and intimidated by such brazen language.

Seeing that he had little, if any, respect for God or His Word, and was becoming more and more emboldened, this author had had enough. It was time to have a little fun! Considering the fine balance between answering or not answering a fool according to his folly (Proverbs 26:4–5), I humbly proceeded to give *him* a dose of his own medicine. I wrote:

Dear Sir,

Let me see if I understand your position clearly. Apparently you are suggesting:

1. Creationists believe: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), which you claim is a fallacy. But then you go on to believe:
2. Evolutionists believe: “In the beginning there was *nothing*. And then it *exploded!*”

Observing all the laws of natural physics (including the first and second laws of thermodynamics) and the symbiotic relationship between all

living things, I must ask you, Mr. Skeptic, WHICH OPTION IS MORE LOGICAL, Option One, or Option Two? Please reply. lwc

Atheist X quickly took the bait and ran with it:

L. W.,

No, an atheist recognizes that naturalistic cosmogonic hypotheses (e.g., Lawrence Krauss’ zero-energy universe hypothesis) are more viable than god myths (all of which necessitate additional complexity by definition) per Occam’s Razor. Your straw man interpretation of Big Bang Cosmology reflects a deep, deep ignorance of actual physics, which is woefully ubiquitous among those who profess faith.

Creationists are the ones who are claiming that in the beginning there was nothing, and then an invisible magic wizard (who apparently magically created himself) magically exploded everything into existence.

To which I responded:

“Sir, may I ask if you are professing to be an atheist?”

Atheist X responded:

“If you’re curious, yes, I educated myself out of Christianity several years ago and I now call myself a skeptic, a humanist, and an atheist.”

**The fool hath said in his heart, There is
no God. There is none that doeth good.
(Psalms 14:1)**

L. W. C. replied:

My dear professing atheist friend,

Thank you for your post. Please pardon my rather lengthy reply, but I believe you deserve a just response.

You hold no surprises for me, Sir. I, too, professed to be first an agnostic, then a full-blown atheist from the time I was a sophomore in high school. In other words, “Been there, done that.” I perceive from your numerous posts that you take great vain delight in “shooting down” believers of the Bible with your supposed “high intellect” and eight-cylinder (pun intended) words. My father used to tell me, “Just because something is written in a book does not mean it’s true.” How true! I have undoubtedly read many of the same books you have read and parroted many of the arguments you believe. And, like you, I delighted in “putting down” and humiliating those uneducated, “weak-minded” believers.

First, allow me to pay you a compliment by saying that *I genuinely marvel at your faith!* More about that later.

Have you ever read, “The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalms 14:1; 36:1)? “Professing *themselves* [or, one another] to be wise, they became *fools*” (Romans 1:22). I understand that you totally scoff at Scripture, but it is there nonetheless—and it fits.

I see you have chosen to ignore my postulate:

1. Creationists believe: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

2. Evolutionists believe: “In the beginning there was nothing. And then it exploded!”

Or, to put it into simpler terms, the “scientific” assumption is that:
Dirt + Water + Time = Living Creatures.

Of course, you *must* dismiss the child-like simplicity of it, because it sums up the beliefs of the believer and the evolutionist in a manner even a child can understand. It is “too simplified” for the pseudo-intellectual. All the evolutionist can do, of course, is to try to complicate the equation by appealing to other “authorities” who quote other “authorities” who quote still other supposed authorities (*circulus in demonstrando*) such as Lawrence Krauss and his zero-energy universe hypothesis.

Did you catch that? It is a *hypothesis*. A “hypothesis” is by dictionary definition: 1.) a proposition assumed as a premise in an argument; 2.) the antecedent of a conditional proposition;

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Dialogue, continued from page 6

3.) a mere assumption or guess. There is no more truth in his hypothesis than in any other alleged “proof” of evolution. It is pure conjecture, written in academic-sounding language to impress (or flamboozle) the intelligentsia. People—even “intellectuals”—generally believe what they *want* to believe.

The “zero-energy universe hypothesis” (and similar hypotheses) as complicated as the theory is presented, by necessity *redefines* the word “nothing” to mean “something.” The hypothesis does not start out with “nothing” in the absolute sense because they still can’t explain something out of nothing, so they *must* redefine “nothing” to mean “something.” Now, isn’t that something?

Sir Arthur Keith (who wrote the forward to Darwin’s *Origin of Species* 100th Edition) said “Evolution is *unproved* and *unprovable*. [Read that again!] We believe it only because the only alternative is special creation, *and that is unthinkable*.” [Emphasis mine throughout]. In other words, evolutionists begin with an anti-supernaturalistic bias. Most men will believe anything, as long as it is not in the Bible. I have never met an atheist who didn’t believe in evolution to justify his worldview.

Most evolutionists, when backed into a corner by pure logic, do not deny a “first cause.” Their theory *begins* with matter or substance ALREADY IN EXISTENCE. They inevitably dodge the question, “Where did that primitive matter *come from*?” In effect, they believe there was *never* “nothing.” They believe in vague primitive nebulousity and powers possessed by molecules. They do not try to account for how these came to exist, how molecules *got* their inherent powers, or how there came to be definite *laws* governing them so that they could produce, without failure, all things as we now have them.

But come now, let us reason together: Try to think of *any* explosion that has produced law and order. Really! Think about it. Does a terrorist bomb create harmony? Big bangs cause *disorganization*, destruction, death, and chaos. Explosions in print shops do not produce encyclopedias, no matter how the atheist tries to juggle the numbers. How could a “Big Bang” produce life, a rose, apple trees, fish, sunsets, the seasons, hummingbirds, polar bears, thousands of birds and animals, each with its own eyes, nose, and mouth? If evolution were true, there would be untold billions of half-way, partly developed skeletons and fossils. But the ever-hopeful evolutionist cannot produce even ONE!

Even a child can see that there is “grand design” in creation. Only “intellectuals” have problems seeing it because of their preconceived opinions. They deliberately blur micro-evolution (adaptation of a species within a genesis kind) with macro-evolution (massive “jumps” within a genesis kind where one kind actually becomes an entirely different kind). They claim anything can happen, if given enough time. That is still another hypothesis! They also assume that if there is water, evolution will somehow magically follow. Not so! *Prove it!*



Evolutionists delight in making monkeys out of men.

If they could find *even one drop* of water on Mars, they would excitedly conclude evolution is true!

Try this interesting scientific experiment: Empty your garage of every piece of metal, wood, paint, rubber, and plastic. Make sure there is nothing there. *Nothing*. Then wait for ten years and see if a Mercedes, or even a Volkswagen, evolves. Try it! If it doesn’t appear, come back in 20 years. If that doesn’t work, try it for 100 years. Then try leaving it for 10,000 years. All you will find will be atmospheric gasses and a few dust particles that you could not eject when you cleaned out your garage! A least, that is “something” to start with! Leave it for 250 million years. Same result. Nothing produces nothing! It’s an immutable law! This belief, this “faith” that something comes out of nothing, is necessary to produce the blind faith to make the evolutionary process believable.

To quote another expert: “New scientific revelations about supernovas, black holes, quarks, and the big bang even suggest to some scientists that there is a ‘grand design’ in the universe” (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 31, 1997). “The universe suddenly exploded into being... The big bang bears an uncanny resemblance to the Genesis command” (Jim Holt, *Wall Street Journal* science writer.) (See, creationists can drop names and quote authorities too!)

Three of the biggest weaknesses of evolutionary theory are: 1) There is no adequate explanation for the origin of life from dead chemicals. 2) The alleged process cannot be duplicated even with the best minds under the strictest laboratory conditions. 3) Even the simplest life form is tremendously complex.

True science rejects that *nothing* working on *nothing* by *nothing*, through *nothing*, for *nothing* begat *everything*. What foolishness!

The book of Genesis, on the other hand, tells us that everything was created by God—nothing “evolved.” Nothing ever will. (By the way, I hope the word *God* does not offend you.)

Every creature was given the ability to reproduce after its own genesis KIND as is stated ten times in Genesis 1. Dogs do not produce cats. Neither do cats nor dogs have a common ancestry. Dogs began as dogs and are still dogs. They vary in species from chihuahuas to Saint Bernards, but you will not find a “dat” or a “cog” (part cat/dog) throughout all of God’s creation. Frogs don’t produce oysters, cows don’t have lambs, and pregnant pigs don’t give birth to rabbits. God made monkeys as monkeys, and man as man. Each creature brings forth AFTER ITS OWN KIND. That’s no theory; that’s a fact.

**You can lead an atheist to knowledge
but you can’t make him think!**

Why, then, should we believe that man comes from another species? If evolution is true, then it is proof that the Bible is false. However, the whole of creation stands in contradiction to the theory of evolution. The last I heard, Dr. Kent Hovind of Florida has a standing offer of \$250,000 to “anyone who can give any empirical evidence (scientific proof) for evolution.” His website is www.drdino.com. He’s calling your bluff. (I would go for the cash if I had even *one iota* of genuine “proof” if I were you. But you *won’t*, will you? Why? Because you don’t not have an iota of evidence that is not a *hoax*. Because all you have are a series of “we think,” “we are coming to believe,” “some scientist speculate,” “others theorize,” “perhaps,” “could be,” “suppose,” “imagine,” and “ifs.” That’s the textbook language. Evolution is true science fiction. You might also like to send for a booklet I wrote some years ago, *Evolution: Fact or Fallacy?* You can have a free copy by writing to CGI, 3900 Timms St., Tyler, TX 75710, or call (903) 939-2929.

I have heard a well-known preacher say, “You can’t prove God or disprove Him. It’s all a matter of faith.” *I disagree*. The existence of God has nothing to do with faith.

Let me tell you why.

When I look at a building, how do I *know* there was a builder? I can’t see him, hear him, touch him, taste, or smell him. Of course, the building is proof that there was a builder. In fact, I couldn’t want better *evidence* that there was a builder than to have that building standing in front of me. You see, I don’t need “faith” to know there was a builder. It’s logical. **ALL I NEED IS EYES THAT CAN SEE AND A BRAIN THAT WORKS!**

This same profound, intellectual principle applies to paintings and painters. When I look at a painting, how can I *know* there was a painter? Why, the painting is perfectly positive proof that there was a painter. In fact, I couldn’t want better scientific evidence that there was a painter than to have the painting in front of me. Isn’t that true? I don’t need “faith” to believe in a painter. **ALL I NEED IS EYES THAT CAN SEE AND A BRAIN THAT WORKS!** This is so simple a child can understand it. The only ones who have trouble with its simplicity are those who profess to be “intellectuals.”

The same principle of building/builder, painting/painter applies to the existence of God. Nothing on this earth that was “made” has no maker. *Nothing!* If I find a genuine Rolex watch lying in a field, wound up and keeping perfect time, I do not immediately imagine all these elements just happened to shake themselves together to produce this ticking timepiece. I know it had a maker! When I look at creation, how can I know that there was a Creator? I can’t see Him, hear Him, touch Him, taste Him, or smell Him. How can I know He exists? Creation itself proves beyond the smallest shadow of a doubt that there is a Creator. It would hold up in any court of law. You cannot have creation without a Creator. (*Webster’s Dictionary* defines “creation” as “the act of bringing the world into ordered existence.”) I couldn’t want better scientific proof that a Creator exists than to have creation in front of me. I don’t need “faith” to believe in a Creator—**ALL I NEED IS EYES THAT CAN SEE AND A BRAIN THAT WORKS!**

Professor Louis Bounoure, Director of Research, *National Center of Scientific Research*, humbly admitted: “EVOLUTION IS A FAIRY TALE FOR GROWN-UPS. This theory has helped nothing in the progress of science. It is *useless*.”

Scientists have failed to locate a single missing link out of the millions that must exist if their theory of evolution is to be vindicated (The Signature of God). When I look at the world around me, seeing the laws of physics (where did these come from?) such as the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the symbiotic relationship of various animal kinds; when I see a sweet-smelling rose, an eye, the human brain, a baby being formed within its mother’s womb, the irreducible complexity

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of any given organ of the body, and the orderly balance of the sun, moon and stars, I understand the scripture that proclaims, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are *clearly seen*, **BEING UNDERSTOOD BY THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE**, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are *without excuse*” (Romans 1:20).

The Bible challenges, “Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons” (Isaiah 41:21). Try this: Put your most intellectual professor, scientist, or theoretician in a laboratory and ask him/her to make, say, a dandelion. They can’t do it. They can’t create even a single grain of sand, a worm, or a mosquito. They don’t know how.

The Bible in its entirety condemns the theories of both cosmic and organic evolution. It declares in no uncertain terms that God created all material and moral creations, animate and inanimate things, and that He is the first and last cause of all existing universes and the things therein. The Bible states that God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1; Psalms 8:1–9; 19:1–7; 102:25–27; Isaiah 45:18).

And yet evolutionists would have us believe ultimately, “everything came out of *nothing*,” that the universe just happened to “create itself out of nothing.” Nothing can be further from the truth. Nothing can create itself out of nothing. Nothing! If you truly believe that it does, my friend, I must honestly admire you. YOU HAVE MUCH MORE FAITH THAN I DO—faith in “nothing,” faith in theories, and faith in unproven and unprovable hypotheses. All one needs to be a believer in the religion of evolution is **BLIND FAITH!**

You see, the evolutionist has *faith* in what he *believes* is “evidence”—what he hears about old bones, ideas, and dating processes. Creationism, on the other hand, is *observable*. **I CAN SEE AND POINT TO WHAT I BELIEVE!** Actually it is *YOU*, my friend, who has “blind faith”—faith in missing links and idolization of others who idolize Darwin. **ALL I NEED IS EYES THAT CAN SEE AND A BRAIN THAT WORKS!**

Unfortunately, most evolutionists have “minds like cement”—all mixed up and permanently set. They will not recant *in spite of* their lack of hard evidence. This proves to be a most *unscientific* mind-set. How odd that atheists love to talk about God! You can lead an atheist to evidence, but you can’t make him think. It seems too many do not have eyes that see, nor brains that think.

I perceive by your many previous posts that you love ongoing dialogue and argument. I will not oblige. I have more constructive things to do with my time. I sincerely wish you all the best. May God open your mind and bless you in His time.

lwc

Atheist X replied:

You write 28 paragraphs of long-debunked claims, fallacies, and outright *lies*, and you conclude by writing, “I have more constructive things to do with my time.” Right! You lose. Thanks for playing. [Note: Actually, there were 37 paragraphs.]

At this juncture, sensing it was fast becoming a one-sided dialogue he could not reasonably answer, I resorted to one of his own tactics: ridicule. (Evolutionists can’t stand being *laughed* at or not to be taken seriously. It wounds their ego.)

My final communication was:

Oooohhh... you can count, too! Now I am REALLY impressed!

You’re very welcome. Glad I stumped you. It was not difficult. Bye,
lwc

As of this writing, there has been no further communication from Atheist X.

Points For Engaging an Evolutionist:

- Keep asking questions. Listen carefully to what he is actually saying. Does it make sense? Ask him to explain.
- Keep it simple. Do not let him change the subject on you.
- Take him back to very *beginnings*—How did “nothing” produce everything? Where did *that* come from? By what laws of physics did this happen? Where did those laws of physics come from? Are they still working today? They don’t know!
- If they begin asking you silly “put down” questions, ask them a few “silly questions” in return, such as: “If I throw a handful of dirt in the air, what are the odds it will fall in the formation of a living man?” Then, “Why not?” Or, “If man came from a monkey family, why are there still monkeys?” Do not be intimidated.
- Most of all, *stick to the Word of God*. It will never let you down.

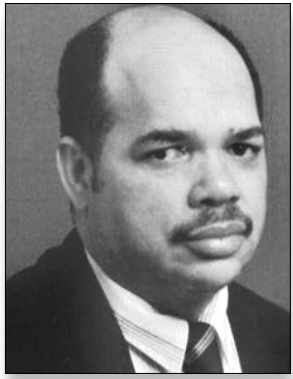
Evolutionary Science?

- Huxley said “the doctrine of evolution is directly antagonistic to that of creation Evolution, if consistently accepted, makes it impossible to believe in the Bible.
- “Evolutionism is fairy tale for grown-ups. This theory has helped nothing in the progress of science. It is useless.” Bounoure, Le Mode et la Vie (Director of Research at the National Center of Scientific Research in France),
- “Evolution [is] a theory universally accepted not because it can be proven by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible.” (Professor D.M.S Watson, “Aaption,” *Nature*, 124:133, 1929.)
- “Evolution is promoted by its practitioners as more than mere science. Evolution is promulgated as an ideology, a secular religion—a full fledged alternate to Christianity, with meaning and morality... Evolution is a *religion*. This was true of Evolution in the beginning, and it is true of Evolution still today.” (Evolutionary Philosopher Dr. Michael Ruse, Department of Philosophy at the University of Guelph in Ontario, quoted in a *National Post* article.)
- “The problem with a lot of anthropologists is that they want so much to find a hominid that any scrap of bone becomes a hominid bone.” Dr. Tim White (anthropologist, University of California, Berkeley.) As quoted by Ian Anderson, “Hominoid collarbone exposed as dolphin’s rib,” (*New Scientist*, 28 April 1983, p. 199.)
- “A five-million-year-old piece of bone that was thought to be a collarbone of a humanlike creature is actually part of a dolphin rib” ...He [Dr. T. White] puts the incident on par with two other embarrassing [sic] *faux pas* by fossil hunters: *Hesperopithecus*, the fossil pig’s tooth that was cited as evidence of very early man in North America, and *Eoanthropus* or ‘Piltdown Man,’ the jaw of an orangutan and the skull of a modern human that were claimed to be the ‘earliest Englishman.’”
- “Contrary to what most scientists write, the fossil record does not support the Darwinian theory of evolution because it is this theory (there are several) which we use to interpret the fossil record. By doing so we are guilty of circular reasoning if we then say the fossil record supports this theory.” (Ronald R. West, PhD (paleoecology and geology), Assistant Professor of Paleobiology at Kansas State University, “Paleoecology and Uniformitarianism,” *Compass*, Vol. 45, May 1968, p. 216.)
- “No matter how ‘useful’ it is, though, the radiocarbon method is still not capable of yielding accurate and reliable results. There are gross discrepancies, the chronology is uneven and relative, and the accepted dates are actually selected dates. This whole blessed thing is nothing but 13th-century alchemy, and it all depends upon which funny paper you read.” (Robert E. Lee, “Radiocarbon: Ages in Error,” *Anthropological Journal of Canada*, Vol.19(3), 1981, pp. 9–29. Reprinted in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, Vol. 19(2), September 1982, pp. 117-127 (Quotes from pp. 123 and 125).
- “Scientists who go about teaching that evolution is a fact of life are great con-men, and the story they are telling may be the greatest hoax ever. In explaining evolution, we do not have one iota of fact.” (Dr. T. N. Tahmisian, Atomic Energy Commission, USA, in *The Fresno Bee*, August 20, 1959. As quoted by N. J. Mitchell, “Evolution and the Emperor’s New Clothes,” Roydon Publications, UK, 1983, title page.
- “And in man is a three-pound brain which, as far as we know, is the most complex and orderly arrangement of matter in the universe.” (Dr. Isaac Asimov, biochemist, internationally known author, and a professor at *Boston University School of Medicine*.) “In the game of energy and thermodynamics you can’t even break even.” (*Smithsonian Institute Journal*, June 1970, p. 10.)
- “We have had enough of the Darwinian fallacy. It is time that we cry: ‘The Emperor has no clothes’” (K. Hsu, geologist at the Geological Institute at Zurich).



The End of Time As We Know It

by Pastor Horane Smith



Horane Smith

Generally speaking, most human beings believe in some sort of an afterlife—be it reincarnation, heaven, hell, or the Kingdom of God. Deep within, we aspire to be changed at a time yet future. That time is at hand!

As Christians, we have been promised eternal life by Almighty God, who lives in a totally different dimension than ours. Human beings are pressured by time. We need to squeeze in time for everything—to sleep, eat, work. While we are engaged in one activity, we are often experiencing stress about other activities that we need to set aside time for. And underlying all of this stress, is the often hidden stress that we know we don't have all the time in the world. We know that eventually, and often, without us seeing it coming, the time comes for us to die. For us, we are in a race against time, but for the Great God, time is simply a measuring device.

Time is precious. Another calendar year has gone by, which means we are in the process of adding another year to our sojourn. Today will never return, neither will yesterday nor last year. You don't know whether you will survive the end of the day or night. In fact, you aren't even sure you will survive the next minute. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14).

God created time for a purpose, and has reminded us in 2 Peter 3:8 that a day for Him is like a thousand years for us. God has neither beginning nor end of days; He's self-existent, hence this reference shows us that God has a completely different relationship with time than we do.

We are now hounded by time in every single aspect of life, but the good news is, one day our relationship with time will change. Time regulates the seasons, years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, and seconds, yet one day all this will change. Why? Because we will have put on immortality and we will have a different way of relating to and measuring time.

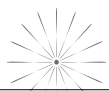
God says a time is coming when there will be no day nor night. When He gives us the precious gift of eternal life, the harried oppression of time will end!

The resolutions most people made at the beginning of the year are probably already forgotten. Why not focus on the reality that as each second passes, the return of Jesus Christ is nearer and that God wants you to be in His glorious Kingdom and enjoy the relationship that He has with time. He wants to see you changed in 11/100ths of a second (in the twinkling of an eye) when the last trumpet shall sound and the dead in Christ shall rise first and those who are alive will rise to meet Him in the air.

All of this is made possible by that atoning sacrifice by the Christ for the sins of the world, commemorated each year by the Passover (April 13 this year).

God warns us in His own words to "redeem the time because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). He actually wants us to experience the pressure of time. Time, as we know it, is running out. We need to make use of our time, because before we know it, another year will pass, and before we know it, death will visit us. We have burial spots waiting for us, undertakers too.

In the meantime, God is working with us with whatever time we have left, to help us achieve our full spiritual potential. He's waiting for us. Why not commit right now to doing all you can to make the most of whatever time you have left? Ω



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No one can deny that our complex universe is an astounding, majestic marvel. But how did it get here? Where did it come from? Can you explain it? Does it really matter? Why are we here?

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Or did it all come about as the result of the careful design of an infinite God? If God created it all, why did He do so?

We are commanded to "prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Now you can compare what leading evolutionists say compared to the Bible. You need to know. Here are the facts.

Send for your *free* copy today! See the address, email, and phone number on page two of this publication.

I wish to dedicate this poem to a very wonderful and worthy Dad, the father of four other very worthy men, three of whom are also fathers; to my husband, whose life with us ended much too soon, in 1989. W.C. "Dub" Bounds was a kind and gentle man of strong character and godly faith and patriotism. By his words and deeds, he taught our sons the values upon which to base their choices in life.

I Thought My Daddy Was God

It used to be at the age of three, I thought my Daddy was God! But sadly now, like all the rest, he sleeps beneath the sod. Like any child I could not see what he was trying to do; I thought the words he said to me could surely not be true.

It's just not right! You've got to fight! Life's battles must be won! With every ounce of strength you've got from dawn to setting sun. My Daddy said you earn your bread by sweat of brawn and brow; So like a child, with trusting smile, I asked my Daddy, "How?"

In 1930s America, the pioneer spirit was strong; In the 1940s we won a war, then somehow things went wrong. In the 60s and the 70s, the hippies bared their soul; They danced and smoked and rolled in mud until their blood ran cold.

My Daddy died when I was 40 and getting gray; Somehow the message he taught to me grows clearer every day. The questions of life, though filled with strife, and often mixed with pain, Are answered best if we face the test, clearly with truth remain.

The 1980s were a joyful time as sanity returned to our land; When other countries badly needed help, we offered a helping hand. Prosperity returned to America and we lived a short era of peace; Could we have seen then what lay at the bend, we soon would be living like Greece.

I thought of my old Daddy's words in '73 when at age 80 my calendar read; Words of wisdom and truth, of virtue in work, were the spirit of what he had said.

No, it was error to think that my Daddy was God, a view that most children have had;

But perhaps I've learned things over my 80 years that teach that our God is our Dad! Ω

Alice Bounds, January 8, 2014



How to Preach So As To Not Convert Anyone

God's Word says, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and declare unto my people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins" (Isaiah 58:1).

What would you think of a dentist who looked into your mouth and said, "Yes, you have a really bad tooth back there in a corner, but you have a lot of good teeth as well, and I don't want to make you uncomfortable, so we'll just leave all of them alone"? You'd look for another dentist!

In like manner, some do not want ministers to deal with sin in the church lest they *offend* someone or create a disturbance. There were good people in the church in Corinth, as well, but Paul did not overlook the evils in the fellowship. He dealt with them one by one, and only then could he preach the meatier parts of the Gospel of giving, loving, and the resurrection.

The way to preach so not to convert anyone is to say to the seers, in effect, "See not; and to the prophets, prophesy *not* unto us right things, speak unto us s-m-o-o-t-h things, prophesy deceits" (Isaiah 30:10). And thus we see it throughout the land: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their own power; and my people *LOVE* to have it so: and what will you do in the end" (Jeremiah 5:31)?

Although entertaining congregations with music, celebrities, and quaint stories to make them laugh or tug at the heartstrings may draw huge crowds, God's Word exhorts us to "Preach the Word; be instant [urgent] in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). *This* is the road to true, not false, conversion. (Send for our free booklet, *How to Be a Real Christian*.)

Oh ye preachers of the Word, "... let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). *This* is the road to true, not false, conversion. Lwc Ω

The Day of Pentecost

by Vance A. Stinson

The risen Lord said to His disciples, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). The Source and the purpose of that power are brought out clearly in the book of Acts: “But you shall receive power when the *Holy Spirit* has come upon you; and *you shall be witnesses to Me* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 2:8).

The Promise of the Father was the Holy Spirit, which would come upon the disciples and empower them as they went about doing the work Jesus had assigned to them. As witnesses to the risen Savior, the disciples were to “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15) and “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...[and] teaching them to observe all things” Jesus had commanded (Matthew 28:19,20). But they would be unable to accomplish this mission in their own strength. They needed power—power from on high. They needed the Holy Spirit to guide them, enlighten them, motivate them, and work through them in convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8–15).

The Spirit *did* come upon them, just as Jesus had promised. The day the Holy Spirit came was a very special day, the first day of a new era in God’s plan of redemption. That day was the *Day of Pentecost*.

Let’s focus our attention on this important holyday, its original meaning, what Scripture says about it, and what it means to the Church of God today. One of the best ways to study a subject is to divide the subject into several study categories, and address each category with a question. The following questions and answers should help people new to the holydays gain a good understanding of the meaning of Pentecost, and (hopefully) provide a fairly good review for those who have been keeping the annual festivals for many years.

Where is Pentecost found in the Old Testament?

The word *Pentecost* is not in the Old Testament, but the holyday that would come to be known by that name is described there. The word is derived from the Greek, and means “fiftieth.” This holyday falls on the fiftieth day—hence the name—from the day the sheaf of the firstfruits of the grain harvest is waved (Leviticus 23:15–21). In the Old Testament, the festival is called the “Feast of Weeks” (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10, 16), signifying the seven weeks of the spring harvest. It is also called the “Feast of Harvest” (Exodus 23:16) and “Day of the Firstfruits” (Numbers 28:26).

What did this festival mean for ancient Israel?

The Feast of Weeks was a thanksgiving festival. The men of Israel, with their families and servants, as well as the Levites, widows, orphans, and strangers dwelling in their land, were to “rejoice before the LORD” at the Feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:11). In other words, they were to come before God with thanksgiving for the blessing of the harvest and all that He had done for them.

They were also to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt (verse 12). Remembering that experience helped motivate them to have compassion for the servants, for the poor, and for the strangers (including Egyptians) who dwelt among them.

The Feast of Weeks reminded Israel of the terms of the Covenant. God had promised that if the people would diligently obey His commandments, He would cause great blessings to come upon them. “Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks...The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you....And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand” (Deuteronomy 28:4, 8, 11, 12).

What does this festival mean for the New Testament church?

Let’s first look at some terms that are used in the Old Testament. God said, “When you [Israelites] come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the *firstfruits* of your harvest to the

priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it” (Leviticus 23:10,11).

The sheaf of the firstfruits was to be waved on a Sunday (“the day after the Sabbath”). Like the Sadducees, Samaritans, and some others in the time of Christ, we take this to mean the Sunday that falls within the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Now let’s look at the New Testament.

Paul writes, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the *firstfruits*, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Corinthians 15:20–23).

Christ was presented alive before God on the very morning the sheaf of the firstfruits was waved. When Mary Magdalene recognized Him that morning, He said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (John 20:17).

The symbolism is unmistakable. The sheaf of the firstfruits *clearly* pictures Christ and His being presented alive before the Father.

But remember, the waving of the firstfruits sheaf occurs on the first day of a seven-week harvest (Leviticus 23:15). The day after the Sabbath of the seventh week is the Feast of Weeks (verses 16). Notice what happens on this day:

“You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the *firstfruits* to the LORD....The priest shall wave them [certain sacrificial offerings] with the bread of the *firstfruits* as a wave offering before the LORD....And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it...” (verses 17, 20, 21).

Now, let’s go back to the New Testament.

James writes, “Of His Own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we [we *Christians*] might be a kind of *firstfruits* of His creatures” (James 1:18). And in Revelation 14, the 144,000 who are “redeemed from the earth” and who “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” are called “*firstfruits* to God and to the Lamb” (verses 3,4).

If the sheaf of the firstfruits waved on the first day of the harvest represents Christ the Firstfruits, then the wave loaves must represent the church—the “firstfruits of His creatures.” And since the wave sheaf pictures Christ in His resurrected glory, the wave loaves must picture the church in its resurrected glory. The seven weeks of harvest between the wave sheaf and the wave loaves represent the ongoing harvest of lives for the Kingdom of God—the work of gathering the “firstfruits” for the time when they will be presented before the Father alive, just as Christ the Firstfruits was.

For us, the Feast of Weeks—or Day of Pentecost—is both a memorial of the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) and an encouraging reminder of our glorious future. It is also an annual reminder of our responsibility to “live in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25), “walk in the Spirit” (verses 16, 25), be “led by the Spirit” (verse 18), produce the “fruit of the Spirit” (verses 22, 23), and “quench not the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19, KJV).

Why don’t you observe Pentecost on the fixed calendar date of Sivan 6?

We believe the original instructions for calculating Pentecost call for waving the firstfruits sheaf on a Sunday. That puts the Day of Pentecost—fifty days later—on a Sunday. The fifty-day count begins with the Sunday of Unleavened Bread. But from year to year, that Sunday occurs at different points within the Feast. Therefore the Day of Pentecost, occurring fifty days later and always on a Sunday, can occur on different calendar dates.

Scholars have made arguments for both sides of the issue. We believe that an honest weighing of the evidence on both sides tips the scale in favor of a Sunday Pentecost.

First, the wording of the text itself strongly supports this view: “And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count 50 days to the day after the seventh Sabbath...” (Leviticus 23:15, 16). The count begins on the day after a Sabbath, takes in seven Sabbaths, and concludes on the day after the seventh Sabbath. To us, there is no ambiguity here. The day after the Sabbath is a Sunday. Count 50 days and you wind up on another Sunday. As if that were not clear enough, we are told

the fiftieth day is the day after the seventh Sabbath. That would be Sunday!

But Sivan 6 advocates are not satisfied with that simple understanding of the word *Sabbath*. They claim that the first “Sabbath” here is the first holyday of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—an annual Sabbath. They then claim that the “Sabbaths” between that day and Pentecost are not Sabbath *days*, but “weeks”—seven consecutive periods consisting of seven days each—that may or may not end with a Sabbath. If we take “seven Sabbaths” to mean “seven weeks,” and “seventh Sabbath” to mean “seventh week,” then why don’t we take “day after the Sabbath” to mean “day after the week”? Taken that way, we might be inclined to think that the “day after the week” refers to the day after the “week” called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is a *seven-day* Feast (Leviticus 23:6–8), and the instructions for counting Pentecost come only a few verses after mention of the “seventh day” of this Feast, which is both an annual Sabbath and the end of a specific seven-day period (see verses 8–11).

But if we take “Sabbath” (Hebrew: *Shabbat*) in its ordinary sense, then the most logical and consistent conclusion is that the “day after the Sabbath” means the day after the *weekly* Sabbath—Sunday!

Second, Scripture gives calendar dates for Passover, the first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, but not for the Day of Pentecost. This seems odd, especially if this day was (as the later rabbis claimed) a memorial of the giving of the law at Sinai. The law may have been given on the Day of Pentecost, but Scripture does not say so. Some scholars believe that the fixed calendar date for Pentecost was established *after* the rabbis began viewing this holyday as a memorial of the giving of the law.

Third, Scripture instructs us to *count* to the Day of Pentecost. This is evidence, though not of itself conclusive, that the original Pentecost did not occur on a particular calendar date, but was calculated by counting from a day that could fall at various points within the Days of Unleavened Bread.

These are some of the most basic points favoring a Sunday Pentecost, but there is much additional evidence. (If you are interested in a more thorough study of this subject, we invite you to write or call for your free copy of our booklet, *Should We Observe Pentecost on Sivan 6?*)

Why do you count from the Sunday of Unleavened Bread rather than the weekly Sabbath that falls within the Days of Unleavened Bread?

The Bible does not say that the fifty-day count should or must begin during or even near the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Pharisees and the Sadducees, though they adhered to different counting rules, started the count within the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Essenes apparently started the count on the day *after* the Feast, though they used a calendar different from the one the Pharisees and Sadducees used. These traditions have a common thread: All of them connect the wave sheaf and count to Pentecost with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The common element most likely reflects the intent of the original instructions. In other words, it appears that God intended that the fifty-day count connect Unleavened Bread with Pentecost.

The question, however, still remains. Should we begin our count with the Sunday that falls within Unleavened Bread? Or should we begin with the weekly Sabbath that falls within the Feast? Since Scripture does not say, someone must decide what to do.

There are theological reasons for starting the count to Pentecost with the Sunday that falls within Unleavened Bread. Christ was raised from the dead and presented alive before the Father during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Feast pictures Christ as the “Bread of Life” upon which we depend for spiritual sustenance. It seems logical, then, that the day that pictures Christ as the Firstfruits of God’s spiritual harvest would occur *within* the Feast that so powerfully portrays His redemptive work.

Of secondary importance is the probability that the Sadducees, Samaritans, and others who observed a Sunday Pentecost began their count with a Sunday within the Days of Unleavened Bread. Here’s what the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* has to say: “The first-fruits of the barley harvest are to be gathered on the ‘morrow of the sabbath’ (Lev. xxiii. II). This expression has formed the subject of dispute between Samaritans and other sectaries and the Jews [i.e., the Pharisees], the former of whom regard it as referring to *the first Sunday during the festival*, the latter as a special expression for the second day of the festival itself...” (Vol. 20. article: “Passover,” p. 889, emphasis added).

The church observed a Monday Pentecost until 1974. Why was it changed?

Long before the change took place, a good many ministers and lay members had doubts about the way the church determined the date for Pentecost. In 1974, the issue was reexamined, and the result was a change in the way the church counted the days leading to Pentecost.

Leviticus 23:15 says that we are to count “*from* the day after the Sabbath.” It was reasoned that “*from*” means “*away from*,” which suggests counting exclusively rather than inclusively.

The remedy for the error involves a simple reading of Leviticus 23:15,16. The count is *from* the day after the Sabbath, and *to* the day after the seventh Sabbath, for a total of fifty days. The text itself strongly suggests that the counting (*from* a Sunday *to* a Sunday equals fifty days) is inclusive. In other words, it includes that initial “day after the Sabbath.” That’s the first day of the count. If you start on a Sunday and count fifty days, the fiftieth day will be a Sunday. (Recall that the word *Pentecost* means “fiftieth.”) There’s no mention of a “fifty-first” day, and not a hint that the Day of Pentecost is the day after the fiftieth day.

Did the early New Testament church continue observing the Day of Pentecost in the years that followed the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Of course. The first disciples of Jesus were Jewish, and the Day of Pentecost was an important Feast for all the Jews. For the disciples, though, it became all the more important when the Holy Spirit came on that day (Acts 2). It took on new and much more profound meaning. Abandoning such a meaningful festival was out of the question.

In addition to Acts 2, two other New Testament texts mention Pentecost. The first is Acts 20:16: “For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.” The second is 1 Corinthians 16:8: “But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost,” says Paul.

Standing alone, these texts do not conclusively prove that the early Christians observed the Day of Pentecost. But the fact that Paul mentions Pentecost to Gentile converts indicates they were familiar with it—and their familiarity with the holyday suggests that they observed it.

The historical record shows beyond the shadow of a doubt that the early church observed the Day of Pentecost. The manner of its observance was modified over time, but many of the early theologians and apologists mentioned Pentecost as a Christian Feast. It is extremely unlikely that some second-century theologians one day just decided to begin observing Pentecost. Doubtless, their practice was a carryover from the earlier, apostolic church.

Ω

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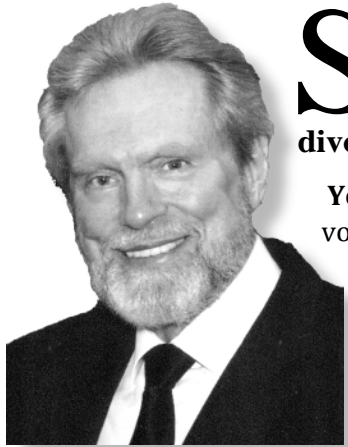
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Answers to Questions About

Divorce & Remarriage

Distinguishing Between Exceptions and the General Rule

by Vance A. Stinson**Vance A. Stinson**

Some months ago, a reader sent the following letter expressing his concerns about the church's views on divorce and remarriage:

You say that the church strongly opposes divorce among its members, pointing out that God hates divorce. Yet, you also say that Jesus said it is okay to divorce for certain reasons. Why, then, do you strongly oppose divorce if Jesus says it's okay? I am confused over this issue. Jesus said (in Mark 10:11), "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her." It says the same thing in Luke 16:18.

Also, in 1 Corinthians 7:27, Paul writes, "Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife." And in verse 32 of Matthew 5, Jesus says that "whoever divorces his wife, for any reason except sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery." Is it just saying that divorce causes her to commit adultery, and not allowing divorce? The husband did not cause her to commit something that she was already guilty of. In 1 Corinthians 7:15, it says that if an unbelieving spouse departs, let him/her depart; the believer is not in bondage in such cases. But in Romans 7, it says a woman is bound to her husband as long as she lives, but if the husband dies, then she is free to remarry. So is the bondage in 1 Corinthians 7 talking about just in bondage to stay and not get a divorce? I am really confused with this issue. So I really don't understand why the church is first, allowing divorce, and second, allowing remarriage. If it is something God hates, then it is sin. The people will say you can repent if you get a divorce. But what does repent really mean? Doesn't it mean to turn away from sin? So according to church rules, it is okay to divorce and remarry however many times you like as long as it meets their criteria. Could you help me to understand this so I can know the truth in this matter? There should be a difference between the church and the world.

A Concerned Reader

My Reply: Perhaps your confusion could be cleared up through coming to a better understanding of the difference between a *general rule* and an *exception* to that rule. You might try comparing divorce with the breaking up of a family by sending the father off to prison. Is it okay to take a father away, leaving the children without a dad? Is it okay to break up a family in such a way? As a *general rule*, no, it is not. Wives need their husbands, and children need their dads. But what if the father has been molesting his children? Is it *then* okay to "break up the family" by sending the victimizer off to prison? Of course it is! The point is that the general rule does not exclude exceptions.

I can say—and truly mean it—that marriage is a God-ordained institution and should be treated as such. I therefore encourage troubled couples to do all they can to resolve their problems and save their marriage. I can also say, in all honesty, that I strongly oppose divorce. What we're talking about here is the *general rule*. But does the general rule automatically eliminate all *exceptions*? If so, then I suppose a man whose wife has repeatedly tried to murder him is forever bound to that woman and cannot pursue a divorce to save his own life; or, if he does divorce her, he can never remarry, because in God's sight, no manner of covenant-breaking can ever dissolve a marriage—so the unfortunate fellow has to either be reconciled with his murderous wife or remain single for the rest of his life. And since marriage is unto death—no exceptions!—there is only one way the poor guy could free himself of the marriage: he would have to kill his wife.

Do you see the kinds of absurdities we would run into if we made the divorce-remarriage question a black-and-white issue and eliminated all exceptions? The simple key is that the existence of a general rule does not mean there are no exceptions. By the same token, we must be careful to avoid letting the exceptions define the general rule.

In Mark 10:11 and Luke 16:18, Jesus expresses the ideal for marriage—again, the "general rule" category. The fact that no exceptions are given does not mean there are none. He *does* include an exception in Matthew 5:32:

"[E]veryone who divorces his wife, *except for the reason of unchastity*, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (NASB). Here, "unchastity" (an accurate translation of the Greek) is an exception not mentioned in Mark and Luke. Its inclusion here opens the possibility that there may be additional exceptions. Again, Jesus is dealing with the ideal, or general rule, and does not have in view all circumstances that might arise. As we shall see, Paul deals with a set of circumstances Jesus didn't have in mind when He made these "general rule" statements.

The question of how a man "makes her commit adultery" by divorcing her has been debated by scholars. It could mean, simply, that in the absence of unchastity (or a legitimate cause for divorce), the "divorce" is not recognized by the heavenly court, so any "remarriage" is adulterous. The man is named as the "cause" of the woman's adultery because he was required to give her a bill of divorcement before the two split up. The fact that Jesus includes the exception (unchastity) indicates that there was no legitimate cause for the divorce he describes here. Some scholars have argued that the verse means that the man, by divorcing his wife, makes her an adulteress *in the eyes of men*, but not necessarily in the eyes of God. Men will assume that the divorce must have occurred because the woman had been unfaithful, so she'll be stigmatized as an adulteress; and anyone who marries her will be similarly stigmatized. I agree with the former explanation, however.

Romans 7 states the general rule but does not deal with exceptions. First Corinthians 7, however, does deal with at least one exception that Jesus doesn't mention. Paul clearly discourages divorce, but he recognizes there are cases in which divorce cannot be prevented and remarriage is not forbidden. He recognizes the difference between a marriage between two converted people and a marriage between a believer and unbeliever. In the latter, if the unbeliever departs, the believer is not "under bondage." If the believer were required to remain single, under the assumption that he is still "bound" to his unbelieving former spouse, then he most certainly *is* under bondage. Paul means that the believer, in such a case, is not still bound (in marriage) to the unbeliever who chose to leave. He is free to remarry.

Paul urges each person to "remain in the same calling in which he was called" (verse 20). He encourages those who were unmarried when they came to the faith to remain unmarried, those who were bound to a wife when they came to the faith to remain married, and for those loosed from a wife (divorced) when they came to the faith not to seek a wife (verse 27). The next verse is critical: "But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned" (verse 28). Notice that those who are already divorced when they come into the faith *do not sin* if they choose to marry.

You wrote, "So according to church rules, it is okay to divorce and remarry however many times you like as long as it meets their criteria. Could you help me to understand this so I can know the truth in this matter?" We have simply offered our present understanding of the relevant scriptures, not "church rules" for obtaining an "okay" divorce. We do our best to correctly interpret the scriptural texts and teach what Scripture teaches, but people have to make their own decisions and draw their own conclusions on whether or not a previous union was legitimate or is binding. We may offer them counsel, but at the end of the day the choice is theirs. If they make a choice we think is wrong, we don't put them out of fellowship.

You wrote, "If [divorce is] something God hates then it is sin." The passage you cite is Malachi 2:16. This section of Malachi pertains to the unfortunate effects of religiously mixed marriages and of men dealing treacherously with their legitimate Jewish wives. God wanted husbands and wives in covenant relationships that would produce godly children, but men were dealing unfaithfully with their wives and divorcing them, which means that they were destroying all hope of building a God-fearing society. It is in this context that God says, "I hate divorce." Yet, interestingly, the men who married idolatrous women were ordered to *put their wives away!* (See Ezra 9–10.) *And that order had the approval of the God who hates divorce.* Now if *all* divorce is sinful, as you seem to think, how is it that God (who hates divorce) can *command it* under certain circumstances?

The answer to your dilemma is very simple: you need to understand that, under certain unfortunate circumstances, obtaining a divorce is not a sin. A marriage is dissolved when one spouse murders the other, but murder is not the only sin that can dissolve a marriage. Ω

What Is The Truth About the Trinity?

by George Ramocan



George Ramocan

A major teaching of Catholic and Protestant Churches is that the trinity is the central doctrine of Christianity. In its *Handbook for Today's Catholics*, the Catholic Church says: "The Trinity" is the central doctrine of the Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church." The Seventh Day Adventists also list the trinity as one of its 27 fundamental beliefs, and the *World Council of Churches* (WCC), the largest association of Christian denominations in the world, stipulates that "for a church to become a member of the (WCC), it

must first embrace the doctrine of the trinity." This doctrine is so important it is suggested that those who do not accept it are not true Christians. Because this doctrine is widely held as an essential belief for Christians, it is important to consider some of the history and tenets of the trinity.

What is the Trinity?

The teaching of the trinity says that God is three distinct persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), and that these three distinct persons are a single being. The first observation here is that the trinity inherently contradicts itself. How can three persons be distinct and at the same time be a single being? The word "distinct" means *separate, different and dissimilar*. How can three persons who are separate, different, and dissimilar be at the same time a single being? Trinitarians say this is a mystery that is not given to mortal beings to understand. But nowhere in the Scriptures are the Father and the Son revealed as a single being. Instead, the oneness of God in Scripture is about unity, harmony, and purpose—not about a single being. Jesus explains this when He draws the similarity between the oneness of God and the oneness of believers in John 17:20–21: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."

The Trinity—An Idea of the Catholic Church

In its article on the trinity written in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, the Catholic Church says the following: "...the doctrine of the Trinity, as professed by the church, is not contained in the New Testament...it was first formulated in the second century and received final approval in the fourth century...Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective...the Trinity idea did not become doctrine until the year 379 when Roman Emperor Theodosius established Christianity as the state religion." Hence, the Roman Catholic church and its doctrine of a triune deity was born.

Protestants Chastised

The Catholic church has gone further. It claims that because the doctrine of the trinity was revealed to her, and did not come from the Scriptures, Protestants who adhere to "sola scriptura"—meaning Scripture alone—have no basis for believing it. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* says: "It is obvious that a doctrine so mysterious presupposes a Divine revelation...For this reason it has no place in the Liberal Protestantism of today." Did you get that? The formulators of trinitarianism state clearly that the trinity does not have a biblical foundation! Protestantism, which is a break-away from the Catholic church, got its trinity doctrine from the Catholics.

Is the Holy Spirit a Person?

The Holy Spirit is the spirit of the Father and the Son—NOT a third person. We solve the problem of the trinity when we understand the clear teaching of the Bible that the Holy Spirit is not a person like God and His Son are persons. The Holy Spirit is just what it says—the spirit of God. This should be proof that the Holy Spirit is not a person.

If the Holy Spirit is a person like the Father and the Son, why is it that the Father has a name and the Son has a name, but the Holy Spirit has no name? If the Holy Spirit is a person like the Father and the Son, why is there a biblical command to worship the Father and the Son, but none to worship the Holy Spirit? This is because the Holy Spirit is not a person.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul clearly states that "the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). Why is there not a similar statement about the Spirit?

Christ said, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). Why is there no such comparison between the Father and the Spirit or the Son and the Spirit?

Jesus said the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. Why is there no statement that the Father loves the Spirit and the Spirit loves the Father, or the Son loves the Spirit and the Spirit loves the Son?

Think about this: Matthew 1:18 reads, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit." Now, if the Holy Spirit is a distinct person, who is the father of Jesus? The biblical explanation is that the Spirit of God is the power and presence of God, so God is the Father of Jesus. In the very way that a man's spirit is not a separate person from the man, so it is that God's spirit is not a separate person from God. Hence we see the relationship between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. Romans 8:16 tells us, "The Spirit itself [God's Spirit] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." 1 Corinthians 2:11 says, "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God." It is God who dwells in us by His Spirit—not a third person. For this reason, it is perfectly in order to refer to the Holy Spirit as HE, because it is to God we refer when we refer to the Spirit.

What Is God, If Not a Trinity?

In the Scriptures, God reveals Himself as a divine family. The divine family of God is made up of God the Father, in whom all power and authority resides, and Jesus Christ, His Son, to whom He has given all power and authority. God's family comprises the Father and the Son in heaven, with many potential members of the same divine family now on earth. Ephesians 3:15 speaks of "the whole family in heaven and earth." To put it another way, two divine members of that family, the Father and the Son, reside in heaven, but the human children of God on earth *even now* help make up this family. Romans 8:14 says: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Regrettably, the trinity doctrine has obscured the biblical truth about the divine family of God.

Man was created to become part of God's family. In the book of Genesis, God reveals that He created man after the "God kind." God created plants after their *kind*, and the various animals after their *kind*. Notice now when it is time for the creation of man, what God says: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." (Genesis 1:26). Notice the plurality. Notice that there is more than one person involved in the creation, and that these beings are of the same kind. John 1:1–3 reveals that these beings are the Father and His son, Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3:9 and Colossians 1:16 also confirm this. In Hebrews 2:5–12 we read, "It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: 'What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.' In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, 'I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.'"

Romans 8:16–17 says, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." God is transforming man to become beings like Himself and His Son Jesus Christ.

We read in Hebrews 1:3–4: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs." Second Corinthians 3:18 says we are being changed "into His likeness from one degree of glory to another." And in Romans 5:2, "Through Him we have obtained this access to this grace in which we stand and we rejoice IN OUR HOPE OF SHARING THE GLORY OF GOD." 1 John 3:3 says when Jesus appears, "WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM, for we shall see Him as He is." Philippians 3:21 says Christ will "CHANGE OUR LOWLY BODY TO BE LIKE HIS GLORIOUS BODY." Believers will have the exact body as Jesus! We are to have His glory. We are to have His image. We are to be like Him. He is God. He is glorified. He is a distinct and separate person from His Father, though united in one Spirit.

What a privilege it is to be part of a church that knows and teaches these things, and to have this great hope. Let us remain faithful to the end. It's worth every sacrifice you must make to enter the Kingdom of God!

See more on our sister site: <http://www.cgitoronto.org/what-is-the-truth-about-the-trinity.html#sthash.QGvVovHA.dpuf>

Beware of False Doctrine!

by Adrian Davis



Adrian Davis

In Matthew 5, Jesus Christ laid out eight attitudes that He said were blessed. Yet when we look objectively at these attitudes, it's hard to consider them blessed—especially the one that says, “Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Matthew 5:10–11).

Yet God says we are blessed when we mourn, when we are meek, when we are merciful, and when we are persecuted. Some commentaries try to portray the blessedness Christ speaks of as occurring in this life. That's simply untrue. The reason there is such a sharp contrast between the attitudes outlined in Matthew 5 and our perception of those who are considered successful today is that when Christ returns, there will be a reversal of fortunes. The first shall be last and the last shall be first; the weak will be made strong; the proud will be brought low. A complete reversal is coming! The world that is coming is completely different than anything we know. We must not look for our blessedness in *this* life. Our hope must be fixed on the world to come. If we are blessed now, consider it a fleeting bonus. Don't set your heart on it. What we must prepare for is suffering. Consider the Apostle Paul's advice to Timothy: “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:10–13).

As we march forward in time, the contrast between God's values and the world's values grows sharper. If we represent Christ's values, we will be caught in the cross hairs of the wicked. No matter what, we must not let up on developing the beautiful attitudes laid out for us in Matthew 5. It is only if we continually hunger and thirst for righteousness that we will endure, and it is only if we endure that we shall be saved. It will not be easy. We have the example of many, including the Hebrews, who despite their rich heritage, were prepared to turn their back on Christ. We must commit to following the examples laid out for us in Hebrews 11, beginning with Abel and marching through time to the prophets. In this hall of faith, we see that throughout time, regardless of conditions, regardless of threats, God has always had faithful people who esteemed His promise above present conditions. We must steel ourselves to be included in this great company.

Despite the fact that our Lord made it clear His kingdom is not of this world, Christians are confused. The majority of Christians believe that God's kingdom is here now, and we are living it out today. Even in the Church of God, false doctrines are creeping in based on the belief that God's kingdom is here today. Let's be very clear about where we are in history. The Bible speaks of three worlds. First, it speaks of the old world: “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:35–36).

Then it speaks of this present world and a world to come: “Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come” (Matthew 12:31–32).

There are three ages—the antediluvian world, or the age before the flood, this present age, which the Bible refers to as this present evil age (Galatians 1:4), and the age to come. This might sound basic, but being clear about these three different ages is a guard against false doctrine. We can spot false doctrine simply by noticing whenever anyone tries to magnify this current age and minimize the age which is to come. The age which is coming is so magnificent, everything in this present evil world pales into insignificance—including any and all suffering we might experience. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

As we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Passover, let's remember that He gave Himself in order to deliver us from this present evil age. Let's not allow anything to keep us tied to the present. Our hope is in the future, the age which is to come. This is the Gospel—the good news! There is no other Gospel. There is no partial Gospel. The true Gospel is full of joy! Let's not accept any teaching that tries to position this present evil world as if there is good news in it. There isn't! If we get confused, we can end up like Demas: “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia” (2 Timothy 4:10).

With this clear understanding that we are in the present evil age, let's use this as a guide to discern false doctrine. Let's look at two doctrines that are on fire in the Christian world and creeping into the Church of God, and one doctrine which is taking over the world and also creeping into the Church of God, all three of which can be spotted by examining how they exalt the present world and minimize the world which is to come.

1. The Prosperity Gospel

In a nutshell, this doctrine promises health and wealth to believers. It is a gospel of success in this life—“Name it and claim it.” *Wikipedia* says it is a doctrine that teaches financial blessing is the will of God. It goes further to say:

The doctrine emphasizes the importance of personal empowerment, proposing that it is God's will for his people to be happy. The atonement (reconciliation with God) is interpreted to include the alleviation of sickness and poverty, which are viewed as curses to be broken by faith. This is believed to be achieved through visualization and positive confession, and is often taught in mechanical and contractual terms.

Congregants in prosperity churches are encouraged to speak positive statements about aspects of their lives that they wish to see improved. These statements, known as positive confessions, are said to miraculously change aspects of people's lives if spoken with faith. Prosperity churches also encourage people to “live without limits” and cultivate optimism about their lives. T. D. Jakes, pastor of The Potter's House non-denominational mega-church, has argued in favor of prosperity, rejecting what he sees as the demonization of success. He views poverty as a barrier to living a Christian life, suggesting that it is easier to make a positive impact on society when one is affluent.

Where in this teaching do you hear the glory of the world to come? You don't. The world to come is minimized, and this present evil world is magnified. This is false teaching. How faithful would the adherents of the prosperity gospel be if all their wealth was taken away? What if, in addition to all their wealth being taken away, they had to suffer for Christ's sake? The Hebrews on the verge of defecting were sternly warned that they had not yet resisted to the shedding of their blood. They were cautioned not to despise the chastening of the Lord, and that scourging is something they must endure. If we are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then we are bastards and not sons. If you are suffering now, be patient. Focus on developing the beautiful attitudes. Focus on the world to come, not this present evil world.

2. Deliverance Ministries and Spiritual Warfare

Basically, this doctrine seeks to cleanse anyone suffering from evil spirits by doing battle with demons. *Wikipedia* says:

Though Christian deliverance has occurred from the time of Christ, the rise of deliverance ministries in the United States appears to have occurred almost immediately following the release of the film The Exorcist in 1973, and the film has been credited with creating interest in casting out demons, even though the practices of deliverance ministries differ widely from the highly ritualized exorcisms carried out by the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.

When you really study the major players in the spiritual warfare arena, it's hard not to see big egos and the accumulation of wealth. It's hard not to see people who are doing really well in this life. It's hard not to see the same attitude Peter and John confronted in Simon Magus: “And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:18–19).

The most common scripture used to support this spiritual warfare is Ephesians 6: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:10–18).

There is no dispute that as Christians, we must be involved in spiritual warfare. The question is, What *is* the spiritual warfare? Is this scripture authorizing us to proactively go looking for evil spirits to battle? Taken out of context, one could come to this conclusion. However, Ephesians 6 does not exist in isolation. It is part of a letter from the apostle to the church in Ephesus. Ephesus was one of the most demonic cities in ancient Greece. The sons of Sceva set out to do battle with evil spirits in Ephesus: “And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:14–20).

First, let’s note that the sons of Sceva had no authorization from the apostle to engage in exorcism. Second, note that many believed, and when they burned their books, the price of them was 50,000 pieces of silver. Ephesus was ripe with demonic activity. In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, however, he says nothing about exorcisms. He speaks of the Ephesians having walked according to the course of this world and the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. He speaks of them being without Christ and being brought into the commonwealth of Israel. He prays that they would be strengthened by God’s spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:14–16). Then in the second half of the letter, he gives them practical things to do. They are to walk worthy of their vocation. They are to keep the unity of the Spirit. They are to avoid false doctrine and edify each other in love. They are to put off their former conduct and put on the new man. They are to walk in love and avoid unclean living. Husbands and wives are to embrace their marriage covenant. Children are to obey their parents. Servants are to be obedient to their masters. In order to do all of this, they are to be strong in the Lord and engage in spiritual warfare. The spiritual warfare of the Christian is the fight for developing godly character. It is the fight for true conversion and sanctification. Surely, in a city teeming with demons, if Christians were to be saving everyone from evil spirits, Paul would have said so. The sons of Sceva were not acting under Paul’s instructions. We are not here to save this present evil world. We are here to prepare to rule with Christ and gather the whole world into the covenant of Israel, but to do so according to God’s order.

Corinth was a sinful city. The brethren in the Corinthian church, coming out of such a sinful environment, had all kinds of problems. Paul worked with them for ages to help them overcome their problems. Not once does he instruct them to engage in any sort of exorcism. Spiritual warfare, yes! Exorcism? No. Some will point to Luke 4 as authorization to proactively perform exorcisms. “The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18–19).

Again, we must read Scripture in context. In context, we see that Christ returned to His hometown. His people wanted Him to perform miracles for them. Instead, He told them how God’s grace extended to Gentiles, and not to Israelites. Prior to this, He told them the passage that He read from Isaiah had been fulfilled. “This day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears.” He only quoted half of the passage found in Isaiah 61:1–3. The part He quoted was fulfilled in their day. The part He *didn’t* read was *yet* to be fulfilled. When they heard these things, they became wrathful and set out to kill Him. This passage gives no authorization for Christians to pursue exorcisms. We are not trying to save this world; we are preparing for the return of Christ. That preparation involves an intense internal battle to develop godly character—the beautiful attitudes in Matthew 5.

3. Post-Modernism

This is a movement that began to gain popularity in the 1960s and has spread all over the world. Like the Corinthians, we bring the world’s influence with us into the church. We must be on guard against this false doctrine. This present evil world can be divided up into three phases. First there was the pre-modern world. This was a world of *mysticism*. It was a very religious world with great respect for the supernatural. Then there was the modern world, which really came to maturity during the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution. Its focus was the *natural* rather than the supernatural. It focused on reason rather than religion. And where right and wrong was defined by what’s best for the *group* in the pre-modern world, in the modern world, right and wrong was defined by what’s best for the *individual*.

Where the pre-modern world defined reality by the supernatural and the modern world defined reality by the natural, the post-modern world denies reality altogether. According to post-modernism, there is no objective reality. There is no “grand narrative.” There is *no truth*. There is only subjective truth. Your truth is true for *you*, and mine is true for *me*. Reality

is something that is socially constructed. The two architects of this movement are Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Derrida was a French Jewish intellectual philosopher. Foucault was also a French philosopher. Foucault suffered terribly from mental illness and became preoccupied with the dividing line between madness and sanity. He was known as “the great explorer of the perverse” because he believed he had to explore every perversion from personal experience.

Derrida believed that all norms in society needed to be torn down and reality needed to be reconstructed. He believed that reality is shaped through language and must therefore be reconstructed through language. This is the root of political correctness. Most people believe political correctness is about tolerance. It’s not—it’s about *coercion*. A new reality has been under construction since the 60s. Post-modernism is a fight for language, and Christianity is losing—so much so, that there are now many post-modern Christian theologians. Post-modern Christian theologians believe in “weak theology.” *Wikipedia* says,

Weak theology is a manner of thinking about theology from a deconstructive point of view. [Deconstruction denies the possibility of essential or intrinsic meaning.]

The style of thought owes a debt to Jacques Derrida, especially in light of his idea of a “weak force.” Weak theology is weak because it takes a non-dogmatic, perspectival approach to theology. Proponents of weak theology believe that dominant contemporary explications of theology are inherently ideological, totalizing, and militant. In response, weak theology expresses itself through acts of interpretation.

In a nutshell, what post-modern theologians believe is that nothing in the Bible can be taken as objective reality. Everything boils down to interpretation, and therefore all doctrines are equally valid. What is *not* acceptable is people who are rigid in their beliefs. In a world where there is no objective reality, no one has the right to say they have “the truth.”

The Church of God must protect itself from “weak theology.” We have doctrines, which are fundamental. Let’s hold on to them. “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

Brothers and sisters, let’s follow the example of the apostle Paul, who, at the end of his life, was able to say, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:3–8).

There was a contrast between those who lusted for this present evil world and Paul, who set his affection on the first resurrection. Let’s be very clear about where we are in the course of history. We are in this present evil world. Let’s also be very clear about any doctrine which magnifies this present world and minimizes the age to come. Let’s especially be mindful of the rising tide of post-modernism and how it is creating a new reality through coercion. Eventually, the architects of this new reality and true Christians will *clash*. “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:9–13).

Commit to the beatitudes. No matter what we face, let’s love one another. Let’s love God. Let’s love the truth. It may cost us in this life, but our hope is not in this age—it’s in the age to come! Ω

The Q&A Books—Questions and Answers, Volumes 1 and 2

Over the years, we have received literally thousands of questions on various biblical topics from our readers and viewers. In the past, we have addressed many of these questions in our various periodicals. Unfortunately, those new to our program and literature usually do not have access to the many questions and answers we have published in past years.

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Greetings from Gary Shakerdge

Hello, I'm Gary Shakerdge. My minister, Mike James, asked me to write this article. This is a thumbnail sketch of my life.

Mike asked me to tell you about myself. I've had more and still have more challenges than most people, because I was born with cerebral palsy more than 63 years ago. Then 13 years ago, my mom and I were run down by a car. That gave me a spinal injury. We had to go to the Komanoff Center, a nursing home here in Long Beach, Long Island, when Mom had a stroke in 2004. I lost her over a year ago due to dementia. We were close because she took care of me all her adult life!

I was born in New York (Astoria, Queens), and I lived most of my life in different places on Long Island. My background is interesting because my mom was a Catholic from Biloxi, Mississippi, and my dad is a Jew from Baghdad, Iraq. We used to celebrate both the Christian and Jewish holidays. Actually, it was good training for the CGI.

I went to school at the CP Center in Roosevelt. I graduated high school in 1971, and I applied to the Long Island colleges, but they didn't accept me. In those days, I had an electric typewriter (I had a few of them since I was around eight). At first, I typed with my finger, but that was too slow. So the CP Center gave me a head-piece, which was a round band around my head with a metal stick coming out of it and a rubber tip at the end of it. That was much better than my finger!

After high school, I found something to do. I read my local newspaper, *Newsday*, and I would try to find federal and state legislation being discussed in the paper. Then I would write letters to public officials about it. I enjoyed it, because I felt I was being useful!

There was a radio talk show hostess I listened to by the name of Lynn Samuels. I wrote to her one day about God and politics, of all subjects (this was 1984 when Walter Mondale was running for president). She wrote back and we became friends. She was on WBAI in New York, but four years later, she moved to WABC. Since I had a speech problem, somehow I convinced her that I had to write to her instead of calling her. So I wrote to her once a month, and she would read my letters on the air! I did this from 1988 to 1996. I wrote about the issues of the day. Lynn died on Christmas Eve, 2011.

In fact, one of the first letters I wrote was 25 years ago, concerning the JFK assassination. I was talking about it through my adult Christian eyes. I said that I respect my country, but we were in big trouble—even at that time!

Then October 15, 2000 happened! Every fall, Long Beach has a fall festival at our City Hall, and we went there a number of times by walking two miles! I should tell you that our street was a side street. So we walked in the street dozens and dozens of times without incident.

I believe we left our home during the noon hour, and we were walking in the street as usual. We barely walked two blocks when we saw a white car turning the corner onto our street. It was coming closer and closer to us, but I thought that car would stop! I mean how can you NOT see a man in a wheelchair coming at you?! Well, I assumed WRONG, because in a split second, I was slammed to the ground screaming my head off! I was bleeding from my mouth because my two front teeth were knocked out! My nose was broken. My wheelchair broke in half!!!! I heard my mom scream, "Oh, my God!"

We were taken to a nearby hospital where we were for several hours while they cleaned my wounds and X-rayed my back.

Mom said she hurt her leg, but she was more concerned about going home with a chair I had to borrow for the trip home. Thank God we kept my old chair! Mom took care of me for nearly two years before we got a home health aide for myself. Then two years later, Mom had her stroke.

When I got to the Komanoff Center, there was an intelligent therapist who realized my potential. He made me an alphabet board, and I told him that I had a computer at home. So he recommended to the nursing home that I get a computer, and that's what they did with my dad contributing to the fund. I see more, but I still use my head by tapping a button on the side of my wheelchair and the computer "speaks" for me. I have email and the Internet. In fact, this is the way I attend church services every Sabbath. I also have a printer should I want to type a letter, which I do at times.

Why do I think I'm at the Komanoff Center, besides the obvious reasons? I think I'm here so that I could become a full-fledged member of the *Church of God International*! Mind you, I've been here for nine years without meeting a person with my religious beliefs!

I got my calling in 1972 when Garner Ted Armstrong was still with the



Top: Gary Shakerdge and his mother



Right: Gary Shakerdge and John Carneige, host in NYC



John Carneige, Gary Shakerdge, and Sidney Brown

Worldwide Church of God. So I heard him on WEVD Radio in New York. He was such a powerful speaker that I felt compelled to write in for the literature, and as time went by, I got more of it. Mom didn't mind that.

Then came the insanity of the late '70s when Herbert Armstrong put Garner Ted out of the church! I didn't know where he went for three years.

Then one April night in 1982, a miracle happened!!! I used to listen to long distance AM radio stations from Long Island after dark. On this night, I was listening to WCKY in Cincinnati. At 11:00, I heard Herbert W. Armstrong speak for 15 minutes and THEN—Garner Ted Armstrong's voice came through my radio!!!! I was shocked!!! So I sent away for the *International News* and eventually I got on the tape program. In fact, I even donated to the church!

However, the one thing Mom didn't allow me to do was to become a bona fide member of the church. Like the average person, she didn't understand why we don't celebrate Christmas. So when we came to the nursing home, she had no say in my life. It's sad that it had to be this way.

I believe Mike James baptized me in October, 2010. He had to sprinkle water on my forehead since I can't go in water. I have no doubt that I'm in the right church!!!!!!

I have another purpose in sending you this article. We know in our church that our country and our world will worsen year by year! This is mainly because our government stopped functioning, essentially. I'm very sad to say that the United States of America WILL soon become a third-world country!!!! In fact, we see evidence of this right now! I completely lost faith in our government and all governments around the world.

This is why I listen to WBAI here in New York. This is a part of the *Pacifica* network which has 5 stations. They're in Washington, Houston, Los Angeles, California and Berkeley, California. As you know, they are public radio stations. So this is the way I get my news.

As one of the ministers says, the good guys WILL WIN one day! The Messiah WILL come back to earth one day!!!! Amen!!!

Love,

Gary

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The following Feast Report was inadvertently omitted from the previous issue of the International News:

Leamington, Ontario, CANADA



Feast Attendees in Leamington, Ontario

The Ontario Feast of Tabernacles 2013 was held in Leamington, Ontario, located on the north shore of Lake Erie. The Feast was held at the Pelee Inn, which is situated in a broad landscape teeming with nature, lush trees, wildflowers, and other local plant life. The hotel features a large atrium, where anyone, children and families, could play a variety of games, including arcade games, ping-pong, badminton, and swimming. The openness of the space facilitated the fellowship of brethren. Looking over your own balcony, one could see people of all ages enjoying one another's company, whether it was congregating over some wine and cheese, or even just some potato chips and having good conversation well into the night. Another feature of the hotel was the complementary breakfast, which also helped create another opportunity to fellowship, eat together, and get to know one another more.

Church services, as well as most other scheduled events, were held in the spacious main hall. We were privileged to have such a full band sound. In addition to the piano accompaniment, we had a mandolin, guitar, two bass players, and three saxophones. Thanks to all the players who accompanied hymns during services. Furthermore, we also were graced with wonderful performances by the Feast Choir comprised of 20 or so members from the Detroit, Ohio, Toronto, and Kitchener area congregations. Special music was not in short supply either, as we had a range of talents who performed from lovely vocal solos and guitars to dazzling accordion playing and saxophone duets. A big thank you goes out to all the speakers who traveled and were able to attend this year. We heard many inspiring and thought provoking sermons, sermonettes, offertory messages, and Bible Studies. For instance, we were challenged by the speakers to be zealous for God, to become more effective witnesses, and to make the Feast a learning tool for spiritual growth, just to name a few topics. There were also sermons given regarding prophecy, which were very informative as well. We were definitely blessed to have been given so much food for thought.

Scheduled Feast activities are always a fun time, and provide another way to enjoy time and fellowship with everyone. Some of this year's line-up of activities included Games Night, Water Park Day, Karaoke Night, and Go-Karting/Mini-Golf, located right next door to the hotel. All these organized events were well attended and enjoyed by everyone who came. Family Day took place in a lakeside picturesque park in the town of Kingsville, Canada's southernmost town, which was just a short drive from Leamington. Everyone had fun participating in games such as three-legged races, running races, or playing soccer and volleyball. The relay game of passing along a wet sponge down the line was entertaining to watch—nobody made it out of that game dry! The congregation was treated to a tasty, hearty home-cooked meal of roasted chicken, roasted potatoes, salad, and pizza. Most of the food provided, except maybe the pizza, came from the farm of Tom and Dana Meleg, a church couple who live in Kingsville. This same couple also extended their welcome to all the entire brethren by organizing a visit to their orchard as one of the Feast activities planned. Many people enjoyed the tour and visit, and brought back with them a few pounds of fresh, fragrant apples and berries, along with whatever other fruits were still in growing season. The Talent Show this year was short but sweet, and still showcased a lot of great talent. There were many superb musical acts such as harmonica playing, accordion, guitar, piano, and singing, but also a couple of theatrical drama performances, including a short comedy

sketch put on by Pastor Ramocan and his wife, Lola Ramocan. Following the show, we were treated to some scrumptious Jamaican delicacies and coffee, all provided by the Ramocan family. All in all, it was a very pleasant and entertaining night.

We were blessed to have many youth and young people attend this year—lots of young children, as well as a fairly good sized group of teens and young adults. It is important for this group of people within our congregations to also feel involved in church. For the younger aged youth, there were daily Sabbath School classes in the mornings prior to services. The ones who were older took part in Youth Day and assumed various roles during church service. We had young people who served as song leader, sermonette speaker, gave opening and closing prayers, Scripture readings, provided music accompaniment, Youth Choir, and we even had special music from the Children's Class. The sermon given that day dealt with the issue of maintaining sexual integrity and moral purity, a topic that is paramount to the development of young people, especially in God's church. All the youth were invited to the front of the room as the pastor prayed over them and blessed them. It was a very special moment to have witnessed. Another fine moment that the church was privileged to observe and witness during the week was the ordaining of Pastor Adrian Davis, performed by ministers George Ramocan and Roger King. Congratulations to Pastor Adrian Davis and Mrs. Jennifer Davis! One other important activity that was organized at the Feast was a Senior's Luncheon to recognize and appreciate the older folks in our congregations. The luncheon took place one afternoon in the hotel's own restaurant, and seniors were provided with an appetizing three-course meal. The teenaged youth were involved again, acting as waiters and waitresses, and were very good at it. They smiled as they walked around serving food, drinks, or attending to the needs of the seniors. There was a pleasant atmosphere created there between the young and the old.

The Feast of Tabernacles at Leamington was well attended, with at least 135 people on the first day of services, and averaging around the 100 mark throughout the rest of the week. On the Last Great Day, two services were held, morning and afternoon, with a luncheon in between. The morning service had approximately 140 people in attendance; the afternoon service, which was re-introduced last Feast, had around 80 people attend, which is a significant increase in comparison to last year's afternoon service. Hopefully, we will continue to see more and more brethren on this last day service. The messages delivered that last day were uplifting and inspiring, stirring us to stand strong in the faith and stay on guard as we prepare ourselves to return again to our normal schedules and daily routines. A common theme from people's reactions to the Feast this year was that the atmosphere was warm, enjoyable, caring, and welcoming. It was evident that the brethren had the mindset to serve each other, which really contributed to feeling warmth, openness, and that sense of family. When there was a need to be filled, people stepped up and were ready and willing to help out one another. Seeing people putting others' needs first and doing all those acts of service really helped make this Feast an inviting place to stay. Ask anyone who attended Leamington this year, and they will tell you their stories about finding old friends again, making new ones, being refreshed and renewed, and being challenged to step up their spiritual game. They will tell you that they laughed and cried, and cried from laughing; they ate and drank together, and most of all they will say how thankful they were to be able to come together again and worship God.

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Submitted by Erica de La Cruz

Church News

Youth Study—Burlington



Murray Palmatier, Ryan Davis, Adrian Davis

On December 28th, Ryan Davis graduated from our Youth Bible Study program, and was presented with a *Certificate of Achievement* for completion. Ryan consistently attended our weekly Youth Bible Study and actively participated. He was an excellent student, and now moves on to our *Men's Fellowship Program*, taking on his first assignment as the Program Director. Ryan is a great role model for our youth, and we thank him for his example. Ω



Ryan's certificate reads:

CERTIFICATE of ACHIEVEMENT

This acknowledges that

Ryan C. Davis

has successfully completed the

Youth Bible Study Program

and understands the fundamental teachings of the Bible.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

"Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."

Congratulations, Ryan!

Pastor Adrian Davis Pastor Murray Palmatier

What's going on in your local Church area? Combined services? Public Bible studies? Potlucks? 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

Florida Cookout and Picnic



Tony Morelli and Pastor Ben Faulkner of the Church of the Sovereign God

The annual Petersen cookout and picnic was held in North Lakeland, Florida on Sunday, December 22, 2013.

Food, fun, and fellowship were the order of the day for the 63 assembled brethren from six of the various corporate Churches of God. Held annually at year's end, brothers and sisters from separated church groups meet together for food, fun, and friendly fellowship with an uplifting Christian atmosphere.

With temperatures in the mid 70s, we had just enough clouds to keep anyone from getting sunburned.

Sirloin steak and barbecued chicken were the order of the day, along with dozens of veggie dishes and salads, as well as numerous high calorie, deliciously fattening desserts. It sort of reminds me of Psalm 133:1-3: "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

It is not unusual for a spontaneous game of volleyball or horseshoes to break out between return trips to the dessert table.

How blessed we all felt to be able to fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, to renew old friendships, and catch up on family growth, marriages, births, and deaths—all of life's passages and experiences.

As the day's end approached, a spontaneous sing-along broke out. Those who endured to the end had a double blessed experience.

We look forward to the day when the "physical" church leadership will help to mend the divisions which keep us separate. Ω



Sacha Therese Holmes

September 21, 1986 – November 22, 2013

Sacha is survived by her daughter Alia Shteinberg, age 3, her sister Rachel Biggs, age 16, and her mother, Michele Junnila, age 48. She was a gifted personal care assistant and touched many lives. Please pray for her family. Ω

In loving memory...

Bella McCandless 102 years young



Bella McCandless, the Matriarch of the Bath/Medina, Ohio congregation, died comfortably under hospice care on Friday, November 22, 2013. She was a “spry” 102 years young. Up until recently, she still attended “Curves” for exercise and fellowship during the week.

Bella was a long-time member of God’s Church for over 40 years, and attended the Bath/Medina congregation faithfully since 1984. She was the wife of the late “Jeb” McCandless and loving mother of her late son Jeffrey McCandless—her daughter Linda Rini survives her. She was also the devoted grandmother to Randy, Luke, Jason, Amanda, and Jeb McCandless and Dana and Bryan Rini; and the great grandmother of many.

Bella was a very talented lady who was an artist in her own right, painting with many different materials, both landscapes and portraits—and playing the piano, exercising, and socializing with her many friends throughout her life. She was always very pleasant and had an encouraging disposition about her—she was an extremely friendly person and a real delight to spend some time with. She will be greatly missed in so many ways. Those of us who knew her well look forward to the day we will be reunited with her in God’s Kingdom. May she enjoy her well-deserved rest until the resurrection! Ω



**Bella McCandless
at 102 years young**

The Resurrection

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (1 Corinthians 15:52–55)



T. L. Kuffner

(September 15, 1956 – January 12, 2014)



T. L. Kuffner

Thomas Leon (“T. L.”) Kuffner, 57, died Sunday, January 12, 2014, at his residence in Laurel, Mississippi. Funeral services were Friday, January 17, at Ellisville Funeral Home in Ellisville, Mississippi, with Vance Stinson officiating. Burial was in Myrick Cemetery.

T. L. was preceded in death by his parents, Thomas and Rose Myers Kuffner, and sister, Ann Kuffner.

Survivors include his wife, Iris Keyes Kuffner of Laurel; daughters, Michelle Pitts (Levi) and Sarah Kepley (Walter), both of Laurel; son, Thomas (Tommy) Kuffner, Jr. of Laurel; brothers, Fred Kuffner of Mississippi and Joe Stringer, Colorado; and grandchildren, Jasmine and Daisy Pitts.

T. L. was born in Chicago, Illinois on September 15, 1956. His family moved from Illinois to Indiana and then, by the time T. L. was in about the fifth or sixth grade, to Mississippi. It was in Mississippi that he would eventually meet Iris Keyes. T. L. and Iris were married in 1975.

T. L. acquired a number of skills over the years, but the job he settled into and enjoyed the most was his job as a crane operator working offshore. In 1988, an on-the-job accident resulted in some debilitating injuries and a long series of medical treatments.

T. L. was quite the outdoorsman. As Iris said, “There was not much he didn’t know about hunting and fishing”—and the game he brought home was proof enough of his expertise. In the years prior to his involvement with the CGI, T. L. raised and trained beagles and taught other beagle owners how to take care of their animals. He, with his beagles, entered competitions sponsored by the *American Rabbit Hound Association*. He went on to become the Association’s first representative for the State of Mississippi. He and his beagles were featured on the front cover of the Association’s national magazine.

T. L. was a member of the *Church of God International* from the late 1990s until his death. He hosted fellowship groups in Mississippi and was an avid supporter of CGI’s efforts in and around the area.

He will surely be missed.

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Passover Service, 2014

This year the **Christian Passover**, commonly referred to as the Lord’s Supper, should be observed on Sunday evening, April 13th, which corresponds to the fourteenth of Abib (Nisan), the first month of the Sacred Calendar. You should begin just after sunset.

Jesus observed His last Passover service (often referred to as the Last Supper) in the evening hours of this same day, just after sunset and through the hours before midnight on the fourteenth of Nisan.

All Christians, baptized members of the church, take part in this entire service. Non-baptized adherents, however, are welcome to be present and to take part in the foot-washing portion of the ceremony.

When there is a reasonable number of participants in a locality, the church leadership will arrange for use of a suitable meeting hall. This is the best way, by far, as the Christian Passover is by definition a fellowship assembly. If a service has been arranged in your area, you are strongly urged to make every effort to attend.

When it is impossible to attend with other brethren, the service may be held at home, preferably with at least one other participant of the same sex—this because of the foot-washing ceremony. Husband and wife, of course, may freely wash one another’s feet.

The Christian Passover is a most solemn celebration, and all that’s done should reflect this. For example, part of the preparation might be to have young children either in bed or supervised. And, of course, ahead of time, you’ll need to set out a sufficient number of glasses containing a little red wine, and a small plate of unleavened bread. A basin with some warm water and a towel, for each person, also need to be on hand.

We have included a video of a recent Christian Passover service online at <http://cgi.org/passover/>. You may elect to use this video by

starting and stopping it during the appropriate segments of the service. If you will play it through, ahead of time, and make the preparations indicated on this page, we believe you will be able to partake of the Passover service in a manner well pleasing to God.

If you prefer not to use the video, we recommend that you observe the following guidelines:

A period of quiet reading of appropriate Scriptural passages may also be useful to refresh your memory and to really appreciate the fullest meaning of this night. This could perhaps include, but not be limited to, Matthew chapters 26 through 28, Luke chapters 22 and 23, and also Psalm 51.

Open the service with prayer, and perhaps a reading of Psalm 22, followed by John 13:1–17. Next comes the foot washing, which conveys an attitude of humility and service. After the foot washing, read Isaiah 52:13—53:12, followed by 1 Corinthians 11:23–34. Prior to breaking the bread, which symbolizes Christ’s broken body, read Matthew 26:26. Then take a portion of the bread (*RyKrisp* or *Matzos* will do) and a small glass of wine (preferably a dry, natural red wine). Ask God’s blessing over the bread and eat it; you will already have read the many scriptures on the subject and know the fullest meaning of discerning the Lord’s body. Then read Matthew 26:27 and ask God’s blessing over the wine, which is symbolic of Christ’s shed blood, and drink it.

After introducing the disciples to this new institution in memory of His death, Jesus spoke to them at length on various matters. It’s our practice to read, at this point, from the Gospels some portions of what He then taught the disciples (John 13:31 through chapter 17). You could select portions of this in advance. Finally, they sang a hymn (Matthew 26:28–30).

If you have any questions about these directions, please feel free to call our office for clarification. The number is (903) 939-2929. [Ω](#)



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS
3900 TIMMS ST., TYLER, TX 75701

Published by the Church of God International

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Flint, Texas 75762
Permit No. 777