

Two Ways

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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providing
leadership
information and
Biblical teaching
Matthew 28:19-20

repre-
sented

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

Unless we heed God's instructions for survival serious consequences will come

In the democracies, each change of Government—especially after perceived failures of the previous one—raises the hope of increased national well-being. Experience, however, teaches us that pre-election promises fail to materialise.

The reason? Our leaders choose to ignore the guidelines for good government laid out by the Creator in *torah*—his guide to life. Consider the following.

Man says/God says

All forms of family are acceptable
Heterosexual marriage is the only acceptable pairing for humans
(exception: *celibacy*)

Don't chastise your children
Left uncorrected children will bring shame to family and community

Society should be multi-cultural
Immigrants should conform to the host country's culture and laws

Use a light touch with crime
Deal speedily and fairly with it, in accord with torah

Capital punishment is barbarous
Intentional killers, rapists and kid-nappers should (usually) be executed

The vulnerable can be ignored
Elderly, the orphaned and the wid-owed must be honoured and protected

Submit to foreign authority
The nation state is sovereign

Sexual freedom is encouraged
Sex is to be confined within marriage

Greed is encouraged
Don't be covetous

Divine Direction

Christians in general, if they ever think about it, cast aside the Old Testament with its apparent emphasis on 'law'. Yet *torah*—law—in essence means

direction. It points the way: '...Your word is a lamp that gives light wherever I walk' (Psalm 119:105).

First century Jews were never instructed by Jesus to abandon the *torah*: '...

Don't suppose that I came to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to do away with them' (Matthew 5:17). John the Baptist focused on a need for Jews to change their wrong moral behaviour. Jesus taught the need for a *changed heart*—but taught not to abandon God's direction for life, the *torah*..

What is new about Christianity is that behavioural change is not cosmetic but comes from a transformed inner life through the indwelling of God's Spirit. That's what political leadership lacks.

Those Old Testament laws—the *torah*—are in fact not merely 'religion' but the divine pattern for a successful—and happy—society. We ignore them at our peril, and will continue to reap the consequences of what we sow.

When applied, nationally and as individuals respect for *torah* is the foundation for material and spiritual well-being. 

A Chill Wind

On a cold day a wind can drop the perceived temperature by several degrees, and such has been the experience of many in recent weeks. A time to wrap up and protect ourselves from adverse conditions.

Jesus, in a spiritual sense, spoke of such a time; ‘... *And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold*’ (Matthew 24:12). ‘Wax cold’: “*spiritual energy blighted or chilled by a malign or poisonous wind*” (Vincent: *Word Studies*).

In the years leading to his return (defined, v. 2, as the ‘*end of the age*’) a rising tide of lawlessness (‘*iniquity*’) will all but drown our world. It will, said Jesus, reflect the terrible conditions that led to the universal destructive flood (vv.37-39).

Christians will not be immune, for there will come a time of widespread state persecution, betrayal by family—even by brethren—and martyrdom. But before man’s wickedness climaxes there’s a creeping danger that will tend to extinguish the individual Christian’s zeal for the true faith.

A Red Flag

Western society has provided a cocoon of creature comforts for the many—we ‘never had it so good’. It has provided ‘bread and circuses’—pursuits (work, welfare and entertainment) that absorb our time. All such tend to distract from true values.

Those who aim to reflect the life of Jesus are especially vulnerable. As states the apostle Paul: ‘...*If our hope in Christ is good only for this life, we are worse off than anyone else*’ (I Corinthians 15:19). For followers of Jesus are at war—against the enveloping culture, against our inborn nature, against powerful adverse spiritual forces, against false teachers.

As a result, these ‘poisoned winds’ blight our spiritual energy. There is a coolness towards the task set before each of us by the Father. The fire has all but gone out of the bosom of many Christians and God’s Temple is neglected, His task laid aside, Gospel outreach stifled. No longer do we daily immerse ourselves in the Word, which

OUTREACH: Kachinland

Our readers may have heard of Kachinland, an Asian country bordering on Burma (Myanmar), Tibet, India and China. The territory is just a little larger than England .with a population of around twelve million.

A native of the area, Pastor Lazum Brang, has for years been teaching the Kachin people our understanding of the faith—and in 16 dialects of the Jingpho language!

He has requested the prayers and support of brethren in the United Kingdom, and I pass on his address for any who would like to contact him in his difficult work. They face opposition from the Burmese authorities, and live in straitened circumstances (a dollar a day on food for a family).

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Kachinland
via Myanmar

‘...*is useful for teaching, for convincing, for correction of error, and for instruction in right doing*’. That has, for many, become ‘old hat’ stuff!

We must be constantly on the alert and pay heed to the unfurled warning flag.

Be Alert

All too many of us Christians are content to rest on our oars and be carried downstream with the current of society’s corrupt culture, content to live in the bubble of relative affluence, content to be a ‘living room believer’ and isolated from the activity of the Body.

Paul’s words are apt for all of us: ‘...*Do not be careless about the gifts with which you are endowed, which were conferred on you through a divine revelation when the hands of the elders were placed upon you*’ (I Timothy 4:14). All in whom dwells God’s Spirit have been endowed with spiritual gifts—gifts to be ‘stirred up’ and used for the building up of the Body of Christ, his church. As wrote the prophet Haggai of his own era:

Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built... Is it time for you to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Ω

Insight from Paul

The apostle Paul's letters shed a bright light on our walk with God

A TRANSFORMED LIFE

Paul's bio is a shining example for us of how a right belief in Jesus can transform us. He first appears as one *'...whose every breath was a threat of destruction for the disciples of the Lord'* (Acts 9:1). He *'...cruelly harassed the Church. He went into house after house, and, dragging off both men and women, threw them into prison'* (8:3). He fully approved of the murder of Steven and was present at his stoning. Paul later confessed: *'...In all the synagogues also I punished them many a time, and tried to make them blaspheme; and in my wild fury I chased them even to foreign towns'* (ch 29:11).

This narrow-minded and bigoted Pharisee sought to destroy the fledgling church. Although a young man, Paul was well-respected (and probably a member of the Sanhedrin), being known to the High Priest and appointed as an inquisitor.

Then he was struck down by a life-changing encounter—with Jesus. *'Who are you?'* he asked the risen Christ. The lives of those he was persecuting had deeply impressed him, for on learning that this was Jesus he immediately asked *'What will I do?'* (ch 22:10). Totally convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah, Paul's life was now dedicated to His service.

His sudden conversion shocked the church, and *'...they were all afraid of him, being in doubt as to whether he himself was a disciple'*. Witnessing the dramatic transformation in Paul, however, led the brethren to welcome him. It was a triumph of divine grace, that such a man should so change. It's a signal that once the Father determines to call someone their previous life-style is not a hindrance.

The change was worked in Paul by his willing submission to God's Spirit indwelling him. As he points out to the Roman brethren, as Christians we are to be *'...transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God'* (Romans 12: 2). He adds, *'...For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son'* (ch 8:29). That, brethren, is our appointed purpose. 

"In fifty years' time people will no longer think in terms of countries...Once England is overthrown the Axis powers will not permit any change in the situation of a Europe reorganized, with great political, economic and social ideas"

Goebbels, 1940

"The age of the nation state is over"

*Herman Van Rompuy,
EU President, 2010*

Letter from England

The *Churches of God, UK*, as you may know, is not a 'church', not a denomination. Our role is to co-ordinate any individuals or independent or other groups who want to work together for our common goals of proclaiming the Word of the Gospel and 'feeding the flock'. In this we are associated with the *Churches of God Outreach Ministries (CGOM)* based in Tulsa.

In addition to our three hundred printed *New Horizons* subscribers here in the United Kingdom (about two thousand in the US) we also have an internet presence through the CGOM website—www.cgom.org. In addition five hundred plus readers receive *OUTREACH Newsletter*, posted on the internet every two months. Nearly all who receive this have no Church of God background. We will start mailing printed copies of *OUTREACH* to all our *New Horizons* readers when finances permit.

You can help spread our influence by recommending your acquaintances to sign up for the on-line newsletter; just have them call or write. us with their internet address. If you don't have internet access request a paper copy—latest issue is for November/December.

In the United States a number of independent congregations are in association with *CGOM*. Here in the UK no group has yet been established though we do support individuals, whose interest and encouragement in return we very much appreciate. In these days of a scattered church it's important we do our utmost to help one another and to work together—whatever the name of our church association. 

Dead to the World?

Our title expression is often used to describe someone in a deep sleep, but, more literally, it applies to the dead! As Charles Dickens put it, ‘*dead as a door nail*’. For death is a ‘sleep’. Yet from mankind’s earliest days that concept has been resisted, twisted—and discarded by virtually everyone and by every religion.

Within decades of the birth of Christianity the concept that the dead are alive elsewhere was absorbed into the faith from the surrounding culture of false faiths. It underpins the fundamental tenets of Christian theology: ideas of heaven and hell and purgatory, for example.

All Saints

The much loved hymn ‘*For all the saints*’, widely sung at All Saints Day services (November 1), encapsulates the concept:

*O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
All are one in Thee, for all are Thine.
Alleluia, Alleluia!*

The dead in Christ, in other words, ‘shine in glory’, in heaven. Not asleep, but active in praise and worship. And not only so—for, by this scenario, the saints are in heaven and are engaged in prayer for those alive on earth, while we on earth can pray to them for help in our distresses. Indeed prominent in this is Jesus’ mother Mary, seen as a mediator between us and Jesus.

However desirable it may appear to be, it is a false hope.

Origins

Of all the teachings that the apostle Paul brands as ‘...*doctrines of devils*’ (1 Timothy 4:1) surely that of the ‘immortal soul’ must rank high, fundamental as it is to so much of Christian doctrine. Indeed it

‘Catholic and Orthodox Christians believe that the saints of God are alive and are constantly interceding on our behalf’

The dead are silent and cannot praise the LORD
Psalm 115:17

God’s Spirit clearly says that in the last days many people will turn from their faith. They will be fooled by evil spirits and by teachings that come from demons

is bluntly called a lie in Scripture, and its origin assigned to the ‘father of lies’, the Devil: ‘...*the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die*’ (Genesis 3:4).

They did die, and like every living creature they returned to dust. Man (and animal life—Genesis 1:24), according to the Bible, *is* soul—he does not have one: ‘[In Genesis] ‘*breath of life*’ was not conceived of as an immortal soul—only as an animating force’ (Panati: *Sacred Origins*). In God’s revelation—the Christian Scriptures—soul is our ‘animal life’, our physical and emotional being.

Lord of the Dead

In the 8th century the Pope tagged on to the existing ‘all saints day’ the popular celebration of the beginning of winter (held the previous evening) among the Celts—now known as Hallowe’en, *ie* the eve of All Saints day.

The evening of October 31 heralded the end of summer, the birth of winter, hence the celebration. Witches believed they were most powerful on this night, and demons most active. ‘All Saints’ was meant to counteract the pagan celebration, which honoured the ‘Lord of the Dead’, Samhain.

Resurrection

The Scriptures, however, teach that the ‘saints’ (*ie* all true believers) remain ‘asleep’—and not conscious—until they are raised from the dead at the return of Messiah.

Even then they are not in Heaven but reign on Earth with Jesus for the next thousand years. After that—eternity (I Corinthians 15:24-28).

It is of note that one of the only festivals appointed by the LORD for His people marks this momentous event—the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5). And it is held towards the end of the autumn season! The festival is the *Day of Trumpets*. Paul informs the Corinthian brethren: ‘... *At the sound of the last trumpet the dead will be raised. We will all be changed*’ (I Corinthians 15:52). And not until then will the saints be with Christ: ‘... *When Christ appears--He is our true Life--then you also will appear with Him in glory*’ (Colossians 3:4).

‘All Saints’ is a Satanic distortion of truth that raises false hope of a (fictional) heaven.

It is this day that the people of God should annually observe—not one that obscures the true destiny of ‘the saints’.

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