

# outreach

## 'That They May Be One'

### *The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK*

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providing  
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Biblical teaching  
Matthew 28:19-20

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These words of Jesus (our title) are the bedrock of what he stood for. '...as we are one' he adds. That is - the Father in Heaven and Jesus on earth. It's a vital foundation stone of the Christian faith.

Yet how many Churches of God live by it? The unity of which Jesus spoke is by no means an organizational unity. It's much more important than such externals. (Previous articles have addressed this issue. See, for example *The Small Church*.)

So - how is it in your local assembly? Do you know all those who attend regularly? I mean - *really* know? What sort of week did they have? Anyone ill? Or had a close friend or relative die? Is so-and-so able to cope with her baby, making ends meet? Or is he or she, a lone parent, struggling? Have you helped? Is compassion evident?

Does your assembly have a reputation locally for being 'closed', unfriendly, cold? Have you seen some folk come to your assembly - once or maybe twice - and never seen them again? *Why?*

Too often a church, just like Topsy, grows and grows in numbers. But, like the end-of-century Ephesian assembly they lose touch with the heart of the Christian faith - '*first love*'. They may, like them, be doctrinally correct: '*...you tried those pretending to be apostles and are not, and found*

*them to be liars*'. [The apostles were the guardians of the faith'.]

Biblical '*love*' is not just sentimental but is also practical. It is caring, sharing. It is compassionate. And it is the cord that binds Christians together as 'one'. It's the essential ingredient in a local assembly that enables it to reach out to other Christians, to make real the unity of which Jesus spoke.

Your assembly may indeed have 'the truth'. And so, too, an assembly down the road or the other side of town which believes the same, largely. But it has a different name, maybe some minor differences in its teachings - so you avoid it? You cold shoulder the brethren (that's what they are) who fellowship there?

In apostolic days there may have been - as in Jerusalem or Rome or Ephesus - several assemblies in one city. But they were 'one church', united in Christ, in fellowship with one another. They shared elders and deacons yet maintained their individuality and independence.

It's a model for the church of God today. Time, now, to get to grips with the plea - indeed the *command* - of Jesus for the unity of spirit which he shared with his - *our* - Father. Time to ignore petty differences that don't affect our worship of our great God and our Saviour. Time for true love.

*Let's do it!*

Ω

## Is Hell Real?

*And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28)*

*And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7)*

The 14th century *Dante's Inferno* firmly set in the human psyche the concept of 'hell' as a raging fiery furnace in which is confined the unsaved - tormented for all eternity. It has served to cement in the mind of many the notion of God as a callous monster. Others justify it as proper punishment for failing to accept Jesus as Saviour. If true, then the vast majority of human kind are destined for billions of years of horrendous torment. What about the billions alive today who reject Christianity or have never even heard the name *Jesus*. Or the countless men, women and children alive before his coming. Will they suffer the same awful fate? Is this what the Scriptures teach?

- first, it must be understood that for every human being who ever lived there will come a time of just judgment before the bar of God (John 5:28, 29)
- *but hell is real!* There's no escape from this teaching in the Christian Scriptures. What's unreal is the widely accepted meaning of the word. In fact, the concept is represented in Scripture by more than the one word *hell*, and in different original words
- it perhaps shocks to know that Jesus himself rested three days and nights in hell. Indeed his 'companions' there included faithful Abraham, Moses, David - and the murderer Cain - together with every individual who had died until that time (Acts 2:29-31)
- the Hebrew word for hell is *sheol*, the grave and cognates. The equivalent Greek is *hades*. It represents the resting place of all the dead
- another Greek term is *gehenna*. This word indeed refers to a fire - the final post-judgment outcome for the unrepentant. The term derives from *Ge-Hinnom* - the Valley of Hinnom, where Jerusalem's waste was burned or consumed by worms
- at the time of Jesus no human had been to Heaven (John 3:13). How come?
- in fact, the whole concept of the unsaved being consigned at death to a burning hell derives from the first ever lie. Most religious folk believe that Hell is the domain of Satan. Our first parents would have remained alive as long so they didn't sin. Satan, the father of lies - taught that even if you sin you won't ever die (Genesis 3:4)
- man was created from earth's elements (Genesis 2:7). God animated the clay model '*...and man became a living soul*'. The soul, we are told, can die (Ezekiel 18:4)
- upon death we (eventually) return to the soil (Genesis 3:19), without conscious existence (Ecclesiastes 9:5)
- at the return of Jesus all those in whom dwells God's Spirit will be resurrected to eternal life. All others will be resurrected (in a material body) to face a period of judgment. Will they live 'by the Book' - according to God's Word? The unrepentant die and their bodies consumed by fire in *Gehenna*, *hell* - ie, eternal annihilation
- '*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up*' (II Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:8) Ω

## CHANGE IN THE CHURCH

They are at it again. The Anglican communion, fresh from its (continuing) battle over homosexuality returns to the decade-long tussle regarding the role of women in the church.

Some ten years ago a sort of agreement (still opposed by 'traditionalists') was reached to admit women to the priesthood - hitherto an all-male preserve. Now, as many such 'priestesses' are attaining senior positions, the focus is on their not unreasonable demand that they be considered for ordination as 'bishops'.

It is overlooked (or ignored), however, that the offices of 'priest' and 'bishop' as understood in the Roman and Anglican churches today are a construct of human origin. The terminology is 'Biblical' but the function is far removed from the structure of the church as first formed under instruction from Jesus.

There's a notion that to deny women 'equality' - in this case, excluding them from 'priesthood' - is to see them as somehow inferior. Yet the early church had no such idea. Christian women were on an equal footing with Christian men, and had a vital ministry for which they are naturally equipped. Their role in the church is plainly stated in Scripture.

In New Testament times there was no artificial division between 'clergy' and 'laity'. Such a concept grew out of a desire for power, the decay of true spirituality, the influence of the all-pervasive secular Roman government. The true function of 'elder' was - is - to serve the brethren. They were selected by the brethren on the basis of perceived gifts of the Spirit acting through them (as outlined in the letters of Paul).

The confusion in the Anglican communion is a consequence of ignoring - or ignorance of - Scripture. Ω

Hello from Lincoln

*Relationships.* They are at the heart and core of our existence. Common sense dictates that without the intimate relationship of a man and a woman mankind would become extinct in a generation. And human wisdom over the millennia recognizes that the solid foundation for stability - personal and national - is a life-long partnership. Since the birth of humanity that's been the practice of every race, every colour, every faith. *Until now.*

These summer months thousands of couples pledge their troth in places as varied as church or beach or mountain-top - almost anywhere, in fact. Yet all too often those relationships fall apart in just a few years - months even. What begins in a surge of happiness and joy turns sour. Separation or divorce affects almost half of Western marriages. Sad, for the testimony of couples who have remained faithful for many decades is that marriage can work.

Think of the benefits. Life is difficult, and companionship is a boon. When all goes wrong there is - in a sound marriage - help at hand. Note the words of wise King Solomon: *'Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falls, and has not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm alone? And if a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken'* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). You get the picture: 'no man is an island'.

You have, when blessed with children, the joy of watching them blossom. There's the challenge to meld two lives into one, of sharing and of developing mutual interests and projects.

But it takes mutual effort. It needs both partners to give one hundred percent to each other. Success comes from submitting to one another - not from one dominating the other. It demands an understanding of respective roles. It requires on-going forgiveness.

You don't have to be 'religious' to have a successful marriage - though it helps. Indeed the Creator Himself appointed marriage as the first universal human institution. The apostle Paul sums it up: *'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church. Nevertheless do you also severally love each one his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she fear her husband'* (Ephesians 5:31-33). The Christian Scriptures recognize, apart from celibacy, no other relationship than that between a man and a woman.

The *Outreach Ministries* is pleased to offer you - no charge and without obligation on your part - the free articles listed below. We hope they will help you to have a marriage that will last. Do feel free to contact us if you think we can be of help with your own relationships.

Sincerely

*Churches of God Outreach Ministries  
(July Letter)*

Request these articles: ***Spend a Lifetime - Together, Marriage - Just a Piece of Paper?, Divorce - Is It For Christians?*** 

## The Weakness of Evolution

"The theory of evolution teaches that matter has an innate tendency to evolve towards greater and greater complexity or order. We are so accustomed to seeing evolution of technology all about us (new cars, boats, ships, inventions, etc.) that we assume that Nature must work the same way also. Of course, we forget that all those new gadgets and technology had a human designer behind them.

Nature, however, does not work the same way... For example, a few amino acids have been produced spontaneously, but there is already a natural tendency for molecules to form into amino acids if given the right conditions. There is, however, no natural tendency for amino acids to come together spontaneously into a sequence to form into proteins. They have to be directed to do so by the genetic code in the cells of our bodies. Even the simplest cell is made up of billions of protein molecules. An average protein molecule may comprise of several hundred sequentially arranged amino acids. Many are comprised of thousands of sequential units. If they are not in the precise sequence the protein will not function!

"The sequence of molecules in DNA (the genetic code) determines the sequence of molecules in proteins. Furthermore, without DNA there cannot be RNA, but without RNA there cannot be DNA. Without either DNA or RNA there cannot be proteins, but without proteins there cannot be either DNA or RNA. These complex molecules are all mutually dependent upon one another for existence! If the cell had evolved it would have had to be all at once. A partially evolved cell cannot wait millions of years to become complete because it would be highly unstable and quickly disintegrate in the open environment.

"The great British scientist Sir Frederick Hoyle has said that the mathematical probability of the sequence of molecules in the simplest cell occurring by chance is 10 to the 40,000th power or roughly equivalent to a tornado going through a junk yard and assembling a 747 Jumbo Jet. It is not rational to put faith in such odds for the origin of life. Considering the enormous complexity of life, it is much more logical to believe that the genetic and biological similarities between all species is due to a common Designer rather than common biological ancestry. It is only logical that the great Designer would design similar functions for similar purposes and *cont'd p.4*

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

A lecturer, when explaining stress management to an audience, raised a glass of water and asked, "How heavy is this glass of water?" Answers called out ranged from 20g to 500g.

The lecturer then replied, "The factual answer is: It depends on how long you try to hold it, the absolute weight doesn't matter. If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, an ambulance will have to be called to take me to the hospital. In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

He continued, "And that's the way it is with stress management. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as the burden becomes increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on. Just as with the glass of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before picking it up again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden."

"So, before you return home or go to bed tonight, put the burden of your work and/or trials down.

Don't take them home or to bed. You can pick them up tomorrow. Whatever burdens you're carrying now, let them down for a moment if you can" "Relax, pick them up later after you've rested. Life is too short. Make the most of it, and enjoy it while you can!"

And then he shared some ways of dealing with the burdens of life:

- Accept that some days you are the pigeon, and some days you're the statue
- Always keep your words soft and sweet, just in case you have to eat them
- Always read stuff that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it
- Drive carefully. It's not only cars that can be recalled by their maker
- If you can't be kind, at least have the decency to be vague
- It may be that your sole purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others
- Never buy a car you can't push
- If you lend someone £20 and never see that person again, it was probably worth it

*internet*

*'Come to Me, all those laboring and being burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest to your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light'.* [Matthew 11:28](#)

## *The Divine Weaver*

My life is but a weaving  
between my Lord and me;  
I cannot choose the colours  
He worketh steadily.

Oftentimes He weaveth sorrow  
and I, in foolish pride,  
forget that He seeth the upper,  
and I the under side.

Not till the loom is silent  
and the shuttles cease to fly,  
shall God unroll the canvas  
and explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful  
in the weaver's skilful hand  
as the threads of gold and silver  
in the pattern He has planned

## Evolution...cont'd

different functions for different purposes in all of the various forms of life.

"Contrary to popular belief, scientists have never created life in the laboratory. What scientists have done is genetically alter or engineer already existing forms of life, and by doing this scientists have been able to produce new forms of life. However, they did not produce these new life forms from non-living matter... Furthermore, because of the law of entropy the universe does not have the ability to have sustained itself from all eternity since all the useful energy in the universe will some day become irreversibly and totally useless.

"The universe, therefore, cannot be eternal and requires a beginning. Since energy cannot come into existence from nothing by any natural process, the beginning of the universe must have required a Supernatural origin!

"Science cannot prove we're here by creation, but neither can science prove we're here by chance or macro-evolution. No one has observed either. They are both accepted on faith. The issue is which faith, Darwinian macro-evolutionary theory or creation, has better scientific support. Whatever evolution occurs in Nature is limited to within biological kinds (such as the varieties of dogs, cats, horses, cows, *etc.*) but, unless Nature can perform genetic engineering, evolution will never be possible across biological kinds, especially from simpler kinds to more complex ones (*ie* from fish to human)... What we believe about our origins does influence our philosophy and value of life as well as our view of ourselves and others.

"This is no small issue!"

*Pravda, quoted from the CEG Newsletter*

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