

outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

PO Box 2525
LINCOLN
LN5 7PF
England

Telephone: 01526 861217
e-mail: coguk@aol.com
web-site: www.cgom.org
Editor: James McBride

Regd Charity No 283358

July/August 2009

visit our website:
www.cgom.org

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

representing


Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

Where Is 'the True Church'?

For some it is an all-consuming quest, a life-long pursuit to find it. And what spiritually-aware individual would not want to be a part of that desirable end. Jesus asserted that he would build his church and we need not doubt that it exists somewhere. But where?

No Christian would like to think that his or her own denomination is not so represented. For who would want to belong to the opposite—a 'false church'!

Yet the choice is virtually infinite, with thousands of options—like some vast spiritual hypermarket, accessible via the internet. You don't even have to stir from your couch, and somewhere there will be one that takes your fancy.

The bottom line, however, is that no one such option is the sole representative of the church that Jesus is building. And that is despite the claims made by an array of self-styled 'apostles' and 'witnesses' and 'prophets'.

We may, certainly, learn from a charismatic preacher or skilled Bible exponent. (The two, note, are not always the same!) But if he or she claims to be 'God's only representative' or the one who alone 'has it right' - you can be sure you are in the presence of a purveyor of spiritual snake oil. Be wary—*run!*

Simply, the 'one true church' is composed of everyone in whom the holy Spirit is living and acting. That means that the Father and Jesus are residing in and guiding them. And they are scattered worldwide—not solely in a particular denomination.

Don't Jump Ship

Even a superficial analysis of the New Testament makes clear that no church of God was doctrinally perfect. Some even bordered on the heretical, yet were accepted by Jesus (*eg* Revelation 2-3) as his church.

Signs of the Spirit

- They 'love one another'
- They keep His commands
- They mirror Jesus
- They love the Scriptures
- But...they are not perfect

Note that, in the early church, congregations were not 'denominational' other than being part of the one church of God.

Each was directly answerable to Jesus through his Word, while attentive to the oversight by the apostles during their lifetime. But each was independently organized. Put another way, congregations were not grouped as Methodists or Baptists or Adventists or the ***Church of God *etc.*

Such groupings are expressions of human frailty, and highlight our unwillingness to truly '*love one another*'. They express intolerance of the opinions of other brethren of Christ and an unwillingness to serve together despite differences.

Word of God

After the passing of the apostles their teachings—a perfect expression of what Jesus *cont'd p.2*

True Church ...cont'd

taught—became the ‘gold standard’ for the faith. At first oral and then over the ensuing centuries recognized as the authentic teachings of Jesus and the apostles, and the written form ‘canonized’. Jesus, of course, had already authenticated what we today call ‘the Old Testament’—what the apostle Paul calls ‘... *the Holy Scriptures* (II Timothy 3:15).

Babes in Christ

In our time we constantly strive to more fully understand these teachings, but because of changing culture, language and other factors over the intervening centuries we ought to respect differences of interpretation and not to proclaim our own exclusive ‘rightness’.

The essentials ‘for salvation’ are writ large, easily discerned from the Word—for those who ‘...*have eyes to see*’. Too often a doctrinal ‘twig’ becomes, especially among those churches that claim to be truly Bible-based, the focus for acrimonious division. The true heart of our Christianity—the living out of our personal faith while in a hostile world—is lost in a tidal wave of inconsequential personal interpretations.

Petty squabbles between churches, then, simply underline Paul’s message to the Corinthian brethren: ‘... *is Christ divided?*’ Exclusive devotion to a particular leader or denomination brands us as ‘...*carnal...babes in Christ* (I Corinthians 3:1).

As says the Scriptures: ‘...*all of you are slow to understand. By now you should have been teachers, but once again you need to be taught the simplest things about what God has said. You need milk instead of solid food. People who live on milk are like babies who don’t really know what is right. Solid food is for mature people who have been trained to know right from wrong*’ (Hebrews 5:11-14 CEV). It’s time to grow up!

The ‘true church’ is wherever the Spirit is indwelling an individual who through faith is ‘...*grow[ing] in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ*’ (II Peter 3:18). Ω

***Request the article:
(or view on-line)***

The Empty Tomb

A Matter of Faith

In some circles it is proclaimed that Jesus never lived, that the ‘Bible story’ is just that—a story, a fairytale. Others reject the notion of his death and resurrection, claiming that he married, had children, lived out his life, and died like the rest of us.

Such arguments, of course, are based on the rejection of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures, the Bible, as the inspired Word of God. From these writings we derive the great beliefs of Christianity, notably the return to life of Jesus.

Indeed, as the apostle Paul comments on that momentous, pivotal and world-shaking event, ‘... *if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not*’ (I Corinthians 15: 13-15).

Elsewhere Paul informs us: ‘...*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect...*’ (II Timothy 3:17).

Yet herein is what the sceptics see as the great weakness of Christian apologists. It is, they say, circular reasoning and mere assertion. Just because Paul says so doesn’t prove anything! So, can we trust the Bible?

Believe that Jesus is the divine messenger and his words authentic as recorded in the New Testament, and we can accept the Old Testament as true. Believe otherwise and it is no more inspired than Plato’s *Republic*.

In essence, it’s a matter of faith, belief, trust. But not *blind* faith. Christianity is founded on *fact*—the fact of the resurrection of Jesus to spirit life. Only the willingly ignorant or the uninformed can disbelieve that unique event. It is historically true and true in the experience of countless believers down the centuries.

Faithfully research the evidence! Then do something about it. Ω

ON THE BRINK: WHY BRITAIN IS 'BROKEN'

It doesn't take a spiritual giant to observe the parlous state of our world—and, notably of Great Britain.

On a 'table of nations' we fail lamentably. Britain is tops for drunkenness—especially among the young. Tops, too, in teen promiscuity. STDs and pregnancies. Add in child murders, abortions—around 200,000 annually—greed and corruption in national leadership, in business and in the world of finance. Then there's the filth foisted on us daily in the media. (And don't we lap it up!)

Britain, of course, has never been perfect. But check the appalling standards of education, the destruction of family life, the broken marriages, feral youth. The decline in national standards is clear. Urgently, we need to ask, *why?*

Sadly, it's the 'frog in the pan' syndrome. The decline has, for decades, been creeping inexorably upwards—widely unnoticed except by a few secular prophets.

Belief

It is a truism that there has been a decline in Christian belief since World War II. A weak Church has been overcome by the secular tide, eclipsed by a flood of alien religions.

Our situation parallels that of the dying days of ancient Judah. Then, idolatrous practices swept aside the true faith, descending even to human sacrifice. It merited the just judgment of the Creator. His protection was removed, leading to national exile in Babylon. As today, the leadership despised the true faith and embraced foreign imported religions—labelled 'an abomination' by God.

Bad enough that in Christianity Sunday has long replaced the divinely-ordained seventh-day Sabbath. Now, in the name of ecumenism, the church embraces these foreign

faiths, welcoming them as equal partners in the worship of the God whose name is *Jealous* (Exodus 34:14).

Decline—and Fall?

It is generally rejected, but the true cause of our precipitous decline lies in the rejection of true religion. Together with a few other nations, Great Britain has inherited the mantle of ancient Israel. We have been the recipients of unbounded divine blessing but have exhausted the treasure-house of divine favour—and, perhaps, His patience. His support has been withdrawn.

Key to the blessing is adherence to the '*...faith once delivered to the saints*'. Israel abandoned it for the false faiths of surrounding nations—and indeed imported them to Britain, as exemplified by the ancient Druids. The coming of Christianity—however distorted—to these shores became the foundation of our generally equitable and just society.

That foundation is fast crumbling. Without God's supportive intervention we are assailed by unsolvable challenges. We struggle economically. We struggle on the battlefield. We struggle in face of widespread ill-health, sexual perversion, unwise, lying and ineffective leadership.

Be Strong

Faithful Christians daily face a sea of disbelief throughout society. It's vital that we stand firmly anchored to the Rock that is Christ, doing the Father's will, resisting the temptations that beset us. For the prize is to those who remain faithful, who '*...overcome to the end*'.

Having committed our lives to Jesus, salvation is ours: '*...now are we the sons of God*' (I John 3:2).

Can anything separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, suffering, and hard times, or hunger and nakedness, or danger and death? It is exactly as the Scriptures say, "For you we face death all day long. We are like sheep on their way to be butchered." In everything we have won more than a victory because of Christ who loves us. I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love--not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or powers below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord! Ω

West Pointless

'...he shall judge between many peoples, and shall reprove strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more' (Isaiah 2:4)

The British public has been angered by the revelation of the finances of Parliamentary 'allowances'. Hypocritical, of course. But the claims are a pinprick—'mere' millions—compared with the expenditure on war materials.

The British taxpayer hands over an incredible £40,600,000,000 (£40.6 billion) annually on weaponry. Even that is minute in face of known worldwide expenditure: £909 billion.

Here are a few more in this 'list of shame':

- United States: £378 billion
- China £52.9 billion
- France £40.8 billion
- Russia £36.5 billion
- United Nations £15 billion

Nations, of course, have the obligation to care for the safety of the citizens, and that implies the need for defense materiel and armies. Sadly, it is all too often vainly deployed to achieve national territorial and economic ambitions.

Think, however, how that money could be better employed! But that's not our world. Mankind pursues the path of 'solution by force'. It ingrains the human heart, though we long for peace and make vain efforts to achieve it.

New World Order

For centuries philosophers, the military and business have dreamed of a unified world—a 'new world order', a term increasingly mouthed by world leaders. The Holy Roman Empire, the European Union exemplify it. Under human control it will end in tears—as evidenced by millennia of history.

In the world to come, as foreseen by Isaiah, the West Points and Sandhursts will be no more—obsolete in that longed-for peace. The vast wealth now devoured by the killing machines will be turned to the service of all mankind. Ω

*Request the free articles **A Message of Hope** and **God's Grand Design***

What's in a Name?

Methodists. Baptists. Anglicans . Pentecostals. Plymouth Brethren.... The names ascribed to church denominations stretch almost to infinity. Is it important?

Undoubtedly it's useful to have a label. Enter a church building and what you experience is usually 'what's on the can'. But there can be subtle differences.

We, for example, are registered with the Charity Commissioners as '*The Churches of God, UK*'. There is, however, a denomination which labels itself '*The Church of God, UK*'. Spot the difference? Singular, not plural—but not the same. (The same group, incidentally, also now adds the name of our magazine *New Horizons*, to its own publication.)

This highlights an important issue. That plurality in our name indicates that we subscribe to the principle of independence for local congregations. Independence from denominational control, that is, with each congregation financially independent and answerable only to Jesus Christ for its teaching and conduct.

It further indicates that those who associate with the *Churches of God, UK* are pleased to cooperate with one another in agreed projects and social activity. *New Horizons* magazine (now in its 13th year) is an example, supported as it is by various individuals and congregations.

Such a concept is perfectly in line with the culture of the early church of God, and is most effective in practice. Ω

Read:

**The Small Church
CGOM in Perspective**
Available in print and on line

REMEMBER THE FEASTS!

Trumpets	September 19
Atonement	September 28
Tabernacles	October 1-7
Eighth Day	October 8

FINANCES (COGUK) - May/June 2009
INCOME.... £624 OUTGOINGS... £871