

outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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

representing

CGOM
Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

Feeling Blue?

Being a Christian can, at times, be lonely. You become convicted of the need for a Saviour. You read the Word of God and find out what is involved. You turn your back on sin as defined in Scripture, are baptized and receive God's Spirit.

From your study of the Scriptures you know what the heavenly Father requires, what Jesus requires. Then you seek the company of like-minded Christians - but don't feel comfortable with the local church. So you search for the fellowship of like-minded Christians elsewhere.

Maybe the search is unfruitful - so you end up alone. What should you do?

Why Bother?

Most of us crave companionship, and there's an awareness that we need a 'support system' - not least in matters of the spirit. And that's what 'church' is for.

A new believer is like a new-born child, still 'in nappies'! At baptism we become a part of God's Family and are in need of caring nurturing. That's provided by mature Christians in the fellowship gathering.

Paul addresses some who didn't understand this: '*... let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching*' (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Earlier he had taken to task those who were still 'babes': '*...you are dull of hearing. For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one*

teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that uses milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil' (ch 5:11-14).

It is when under the guidance of competent and caring brethren that spiritual growth takes place most effectively. Ideally, all of us should be part of a local fellowship. But that's not always possible.

Barriers

By the very nature and demands of Christ's message - the Gospel - relatively few commit fully to Him. As in the 'parable of the sower' (Matthew 13), there are many distractions to hinder a fruitful spiritual life. We should not be surprised, then, to find committed believers few on the ground. Opportunities are, however, available. But there are barriers.

Not least is *distance*. Not everyone has the health or the means or the finances to travel to a distant service for fellowship. It isn't reasonable to spend several hours on a Sabbath or holy day in travel. Physical exhaustion undermines alertness. For many, attendance at the annual seven-day *Festival of Tabernacles* every autumn is a life-line - fellowship, instruction, social interaction.

Some Christians, however, won't become part of an accessible local fellowship because of its *teachings*. Understandable - if it is heretical! But too often the differences are personal: a dislike of another member or of the pastor perhaps. Such must be resolved and not seen as a reason to depart. [Jesus provides the pattern for handling this (Matthew 18)]

More likely is a difference *cont'd p.4*

A Kind of Peace...for now

A smiling Ian Paisley is pictured with Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams following the 'historic' - an overplayed word - agreement to share power in Northern Ireland. A wearied sense of relief has settled over the Province following nearly four decades of sectarian conflict and over three thousand murders. Northern Ireland no longer dominates the headlines.

Not everyone, unsurprisingly, is deliriously happy. There have been resignations from Dr Paisley's party, the DUP. Died-in-the-wool red, white and blue Protestants see the 'Good Friday Agreement' as betrayal, as do deep green Republicans. Many on both sides of the divide don't yet have closure - indeed some have yet to bury murdered loved ones, still 'missing'.

'...no peace'

Many view the political love-in as an unacceptable compromise. Questions are asked. How could the Protestant majority representative - and a church minister at that - find agreement with a killing machine? Why has the Irish Republican Army's infrastructure not been totally disbanded? And why is the IRA's Army Council still active? Why is it still funded?

Talk to the man-in-the-street and you are disabused of the notion of 'peace'. Fear persists.

Armed thugs continue to control their 'turf', the legacy of decades of lawlessness. Drug wars persist, as do barbarous knee-cappings and summary 'justice'. Unrepentant killers are released from prison to again walk the streets. Especially in border areas there's 'ethnic cleansing' as 'the others' are intimidated into leaving their homes.

No long-running dispute has an easy solution. Politics is one strand in the complex divisions in Northern Ireland. The Nationalists are determined to dispose of the border between the United Kingdom and Ireland (Eire), and have shifted tactics from 'war, war' to 'jaw, jaw'. The strategy is on track, with Nationalists now power-sharing with Unionists. Demographics - the population is for the moment near enough balanced - will heavily influence progress.

The Religious Factor

Nor can religion be excluded from the equation. There remains a deep divide between Roman Catholics (mostly Nationalist) and Protestants (almost entirely favouring union with Great Britain). 'Papists' and 'Prods' don't mix!

That 'divide', however, is in process of erosion. In common with modern trends, the barriers are being dismantled. Many young are now inter-marrying - a practice that in the past forced many mixed couples to

emigrate for their own safety. Children from both sides of the divide are for the first time in school together. The decreasing influence of religion - especially in the university and in business - blunts the sharp edge of sectarianism. Then there's increasing dialogue - Catholic and Protestant clergy sharing church services, supporting joint projects. (Though not everyone is supportive.)

The reason for the religious conflict is of course well-known: the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. In Northern Ireland - at the main inter-face between the two faiths - political and religious issues were sharpened. The North's institutions were Protestant-biased and Catholics were the 'subversive enemy'. They resented the role of under-dog - and conflict was inevitable.

Confused Christianity

A dispassionate observer might rightly be confused. There are, of course, obvious differences between the two faiths. The role of Pope, for example; or the Roman emphasis on 'works'.

But in reality they have a shared faith. Both believe in Jesus as Saviour, and in God the Father. Both quote the same Scriptures. Both believe the (unbiblical) doctrine of an 'immortal soul' and, incongruously, in the resurrection from the dead. Both believe in a Judgment with the outcome either Heaven or a fiery Hell. Both worship on Sunday, observe Christmas and Easter - observances nowhere found in the Bible.

Perhaps there is a dawning realization of this commonality, though the dominant force is, and ever will be, Rome - which claims to be '*always the same*'. In the light of Bible prophecy full capitulation is in due time inevitable.

Prophetic Scenario

Many students of Biblical prophecy conclude that in the end-time there will arise an all-powerful world-dominating political and military entity in continental Europe. This final conglomerate of ten nations will in concert be a short-lived unstoppable force which will ally with a deceptive miracle-working religious power - seen as paganized Christianity. All who oppose their authority - which will be backed by the power of the Devil - will be hunted down and killed:

'...the dragon was enraged over the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, those keeping the commandments of God, and having the testimony of Jesus Christ' Revelation 12:17

Current activity on both the political and religious fronts lends credence to this scenario. The moral and economic decline of the Anglo-Saxon *cont'd p.4*

CGOM Conference 2007

The *Outreach Ministries* held an informal mini-Conference the weekend of April 20/21, hosted by the Tulsa, Oklahoma, Church of God in their church building. It was attended by members of Committees and designed to summarize our present position, and to plan the year ahead.

Tulsa pastor Lawrence Gregory reports: "The CGOM committees met to re-examine our purpose for existence and review our past and present accomplishments and our future direction. We agreed to continue our sound, proven practices of operation, yet open to consider changes for better outreach where possible and necessary. We all desire to be effective stewards of God's resources which have been made available to CGOM".

We will continue to make freely available our resources where requested and as finances permit. CGOM is increasing its outreach to overseas assemblies. At present this is, for financial reasons, limited to the provision of literature. Richard

Gawith noted that the number of fulfilled requests for literature has considerably increased despite restricted income.

Various 'house-keeping' matters were reviewed, with the future of our internet outreach specially considered. Closer contact between our associated independent assemblies is encouraged. We will continue to welcome those individuals and assemblies who wish to be affiliated with CGOM.

As a service organization, said Pastor Gregory, "we don't try to copy other ministries or try to 're-invent the wheel' but continue doing what works for us, with careful modification when necessary. We need to stay on top of our calling in doing our part of the work of God - small though it is compared to a few others, yet a unique and important contribution in the Gospel outreach". Ω

CONTACT US...

...if you would like to associate with CGOM as an individual, or as an independent assembly

Conflict of Faith

I'm a Christian. I hate this world's systems, its institutions. I'm concerned about the immorality that assaults us via television and the big screen, horrified by the suffering that is the natural consequence of debauchery. I object to corruption at all levels of government, and in business. I'm saddened by the rampant and blatant sexuality of our young, by lives ruined through illegal drugs, by conspicuous wealth, by pornography and paedophiles and abortion. I'm sickened by drunks on our streets.

I truly hate and am upset by all these despicable acts of human degradation. They run contrary to all those Christian principles derived from the Bible. Sometimes I think '*...stop the world, I want to get off*'.

But... it never crosses my mind to construct a fertilizer bomb with the intention of mutilating and murdering revellers no matter how debauched. My faith forbids non-State violence - if I don't like a Government policy I don't plot its violent overthrow. I don't kill and maim other Christians with whom I disagree - or indeed men, women and children from any faith or none. I obey the laws of my nation unless they are in conflict with God's peaceable laws. I don't preach hate. I do seek to influ-

ence in a positive and peaceful way those with whom I come in contact. But that's Christianity. That's how all true Bible-believing Christians act.

So what is it with Islam that drives multitudes of its adherents to such depraved acts of violence worldwide? Is it their faith?

Clearly, Islamic violence erupts where they are in proximity to those with a different faith or where they have colonized non-Islamic areas or there is sectarian tension. The voices of Islamic violence cite their Islamic faith as the driving force for violent overthrow of 'the infidel'.

I do look forward, however, to 'a new world' in which dwells right behaviour - behaviour that reflects the Word of God. A world at peace with itself. A world of justice and fairness and equity in which all may develop their full potential as children of the Creator God, the Father of all mankind. A world in religious harmony and ruled over by Jesus the one and only Messiah. It *will* come - in the Father's perfect timing. I wait patiently, praying '*Your Kingdom come*'. Isn't that what we all want? Ω

STUDY THE WORD

Be sure to enroll for our free 32-lesson Bible Study Course. It's a key to what is for many a 'Book of Mystery'

available from any of our addresses

MiniStudies

A series of short studies in the Scriptures. Each is one-page long and is an introduction to a specific Bible topic. There are 45 titles so far. Use them as outlines for private or public studies

If you have missed any of these they can be viewed in the ARTICLES sector of the CGOM web-site: **www.cgom.org**

Feeling Blue ...cont'd

of opinion over an - often petty - point of doctrine. Unless the teaching undermines the fundamentals of the Christian faith it should be tolerated. With prayer and open discussion such differences can be resolved. Any sound fellowship should encourage these principles, and if not it's the wrong place! [Request the article: *The Knowledge That Counts*]

Living Stones

Everyone in whom is the Spirit of God is an essential part of God's spiritual Temple. You are drawn to Jesus by the Father and accepted by Him and commit to Him. You become a 'living stone' (I Peter 2:5) specifically hewn for a designated part of that Temple. You must, in other words, be ready to fill the part Christ has prepared for you: 'I am going to prepare a place for you' He says (John 14:2).

Jesus imparts spiritual gifts in each Christian - each according to our natural talents and abilities. (It's our responsibility to nourish them.) They are not for personal aggrandisement but to enable us to fulfil our assigned role. Personal connection with the church at large is therefore vital. Even a 'babe in Christ' has life experiences and insights to impart to the brethren - no matter how mature the latter may be.

As stated, direct face-to-face involvement in a local assembly may not always be feasible. A Christian in this situation should, however, develop strong links with a like-minded assembly, accepting pastoral oversight. There is, too, a wealth of sound study material available both in print and *via* the internet. Also available from many sources are CDs and DVDs. But...

'...try the spirits'

Note Paul's admonition: '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. They will also be fooled by the false claims of liars whose consciences have lost all feeling' (I Timothy 4:1-2)

The apostle John urges caution: 'Dear friends, don't believe everyone who claims to have the Spirit of God. Test them all to find out if they really do come from God. Many false prophets have already gone out into the world' (I John 4:1). Already! And only decades after Jesus was among us! How much worse now, as false doctrine has festered for two thousand years. Hence the need to be tied into a source of proven sound Bible teaching.

Whatever your situation, any Christian - alone or closely associated with an established assembly - can have the confidence that '...truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ' (I John

A Kind of Peace ...cont'd

nations contrasts with the strengthening of the European Union - a situation encouraged by the Vatican. A 'United States of Europe' under Catholic domination has long been its dream - a resurgence of the 'Holy Roman Empire'.

Despite the doctrinal similarities there is no doubt that the nonconformist Protestant understanding of Christianity - though in many respects far off the mark - better reflects the Biblical teaching. But both have departed seriously from the Biblical faith, introducing practices that would make the apostles' hair stand on end. The rising tide of ecumenism now surges round solid evangelicals and threatens to engulf them in even more false teaching - what Paul called 'doctrines of demons'.

With political power in its grasp the church historically has not been slow to wield the axe - sometimes literally. Witness the demonic sixteenth century attempts to exterminate those who would make the Scriptures available to the masses in the vernacular: Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer and their supporters for example. They were burnt at the stake, hacked to pieces, beheaded, exiled in a devilish attempt to bury truth.

Given man's diversity - and inability to forge lasting peace - attempts to encourage inter-faith dialogue (*eg* the *World Parliament of Religions* or the *Three Faiths Forum*) are laudable. But they simply lower the opposition to this coming worldwide end-time religion.

Northern Ireland is a preview of the worldwide future for all Bible-believing Christians. (Most Christians *don't really* believe the Bible!). Professing Christians (most, sadly) when faced with persecution - 'resisting unto blood' - will simply roll over and 'worship the Beast'. Anything for a quiet life.

Jesus warned of this coming persecution of the faithful (*eg* Matthew 24:9). The eternal reward for faithfulness to the Word of God far eclipses short-term pain: '...he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved' (v.13). Ω

1:3). Jesus is with you '...always, even to the end of the world' (Matthew 28:20). Ω

Request our **Statement of Beliefs ...**
...and test it against the Scriptures!

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