

outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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

representing



Is There 'One True Church'?

The question sounds a bit silly. Surely there must be one such Christian church. Isn't God consistent, unchanging? Would He set up a 'church' and be comfortable with many conflicting interpretations of His guidelines for it? What, indeed, are His standards?

If you claim to be 'in' that 'one true church' - then how do you know? How do you judge it? For all the others must then be *false* churches? If so, what differences are there that make it false? Does it just take one wrong doctrine? Two? Maybe three? Do you tread the 'road much travelled'? Or, is yours the 'narrow road'? If you don't think you are part of it - why not? If your present choice embraces serious false teaching should you leave? Dare you leave?

Since you fellowship in a particular church, surely you must be concerned to be in the one that has God's approval! Are there not consequences to being in a *false* church? Would you join - or stay in - a cult?

What's False?

If you are a 'nonconformist' - a Methodist or a Baptist for example - it's likely you are at least uncomfortable with the teachings of the Roman Catholic church - and *vice versa*. Communion *versus* Mass. Faith *versus* works. People *versus* Pope. Anglicans could add Canterbury *versus* Rome. Then there are teachings such as infant baptism *or* immersion, episcopal *or* presbyterian *or* congregational governance.

Anyway - who sets the standard? The Pope has his unalterable set of beliefs, and recently claimed 'one and only

true church' status. John Wesley had his belief system. The Quakers, too. And the Brethren and Anglicans - *etc.* Throw in the Mormons and the Moonies and the Scientologists, considered by some as outsiders. Yet all claim the Christian Scriptures as a source Book, though the links are, for some, weak.

Recall that the early church embraced a variety of belief. But only to a point, beyond which was heresy (Galatians 1:6-9).

Unity of Belief

The ecumenical movement, of course, strives to unite the different strands of Christianity. Given entrenched ideas and traditions - and human nature - that has been a struggle stretching back six decades or more. Unsurprisingly, the Roman Church dominates the discussion. So Methodists blend with Anglicans and Anglicans cosy up to Catholics.

But it's a puzzle as to why there is such difficulty given the raft of shared fundamental beliefs. Protestant and Catholic and most 'cults', for example, assume the doctrine of an *immortal soul* as the platform for a number of fundamental beliefs. *Future reward*, for instance: for all agree, with minor variation, that the 'soul' goes upon death to *heaven* or *hell* or *Limbo* or *Purgatory*. (Indeed these views are shared with non-Christian faiths.) From the belief also stems prayers for the dead, indulgences, Mass, All Hallows.

There is, too, the shared and fiercely-defended idea of a Triune God, a *Trinity*. Add in shared *festivals*: Christmas, Easter, Sunday, Saints Days, Lent, *cont'd p.3*

SALVATION...is it a 'walkover'?

With over two billion Christians in the world we can expect a wide range of commitment to the principles of the faith. For many, to claim the title 'Christian' is simply a marker to differentiate from a Hindu or Muslim *etc.* In other words, their faith is not a life-changing experience.

But this sits uneasily with the words of Jesus: '*... narrow is the gate, and constricted is the way that leads away into life, and few are the ones finding it*' (*Matthew 7:14*). Elsewhere he urges that we '*strive*' [struggle] to enter (Luke 13:24). So, apparently *not* a walkover.

In general, most become 'Christian' simply because born into a Christian family - just as some are born Muslim because born into an Islamic family, an Islamic nation. Others undergo a 'conversion experience'. They become convicted of the correctness of a particular branch of Christianity and embrace it. Some call it being 'born again'.

Covenant Agreement

Often overlooked is that commitment to the Christian faith means to enter a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ. Note his words: '*...if you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love*' (*John 15:10*). Just as Jesus perfectly reflected the will and commands of the Father we are to be in submission to him. It's a two-way street - Jesus makes salvation available to us and in return we do as he says.

Salvation comes first: '*...God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*' (Romans 5:8). The Father initiates salvation - freely flowing from His mercy and His love. Then in love we submit to His will.

Ancient Faith

To become Christian is to enter the most ancient of faiths. God does not change His fundamentals. Abraham, for example, was one of the faithful - the '*friend of God*' - not because of his obedience to the divine commands but because of his faith. He trusted God, though that didn't stop him obeying Him '*...I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham your [Isaac's] father...because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws*' (Genesis 26:3-5)!

To '*abide in Christ*', then, we keep his commandments. Indeed the famed 'sermon on the mount' is an exposition of the divine Law. The Law, however, cannot save. Never has. Only Christ's sacrifice freely accepted does that. But Christ's 'religion' is '*what we*

heard from the beginning'.

Man functions best only when we - as did Abraham - conform to '*the Maker's Manual*'. As Christians we are to strive for perfection, so naturally we are diligent to follow the Manual. That's how we '*abide in him*'. That Manual, of course is the divine Law. By it our lives are transformed: '*The Law of the LORD is perfect; it gives us new life. His teachings last forever, and they give wisdom to ordinary people*' (Psalm 19:7 CEV).

The Law, the Word of God, the Holy Spirit - all are expressions of the divine mind. That Law influenced the minds of the people of God through the millennia. Our forebears in faith worshipped and praised the Creator as they expressed their love and submission to that Law. Wrote Paul: '*the Law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good*' (Romans 7:12). In Christ it is implanted in the mind of converted men and women - a '*new covenant*', a new way of life. The apostle John, echoing Jesus: '*...And he that keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in him*' (1 John 3:24).

*I have longed for your salvation, O LORD;
and your law is my delight*

Day of Trumpets:	September 13
Atonement:	September 22
Tabernacles:	Sept 27 - October 3
Eighth Day:	October 4

Rejoice in God's Feasts

Far from being 'old hat', the festivals appointed by God for His people throughout the ages are an annual opportunity to rejoice before Him

- each of these annual assemblies shouts an aspect of the divine plan for mankind
- they were instituted by God - JHVH, not Moses
- their significance has gradually been unveiled over centuries in the Scriptures
- they were observed in Israel, and by Jesus and the apostles, and by first-century Christians
- when Jesus returns they will be observed worldwide and in all nations
- the festivals are a time of fellowship, instruction and celebration

each year multiple thousands of Christians assemble to observe festivals

Request the articles:

**God's Holy Days
Tabernacles...God's Plan for Man**

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Were the apostles ignorant as to when Jesus would return? Did they believe he would come in their lifetime?

Read the surprising answers in the September/October issue of *New Horizons* available from any of our addresses, or view on-line

Democratic Reality

"*Democracy*—the worst form of government, apart from all other forms". So, roughly, said Winston Churchill. The word means simply 'rule by the people'. Given the rich variety of opinion within any population, clearly that had to be modified to be workable. So in Britain we have 'Parliamentary democracy' by which we elect individuals whom we think will best promote 'my' values. Then said Members of Parliament go ahead and follow the whims of their own Party!

Today there are cries for 'more democracy'. Let the people have more of a say. Indeed, let's be represented by 18 year-olds, allow children of sixteen to vote, allow convicted criminals a say in government. Ignore the morality of leaders. Is this how to run a nation?

That, ultimately, is the path to chaos. It results, in pandering to even the lowest layers of society.

A Better Way

Government should govern. If a policy is right (that's determined by the unchanging Word of God) it should be implemented - whatever says *vox populi*. But of course that's not how to be (re-)elected! In a democracy success results from pleasing the electorate. Sadly, in the hands of humanity applying the right path in government tends to despotism.

That 'right path' has been outlined by the Creator and recorded for our enlightenment in the Christian Bible. Ancient Israel's constitution is the model for government at all times and in all places.

But can you envisage any democratic government applying it? No adultery and no same-sex relationships. No occult practices: mediums, astrologers, pagan rites all banned. Only one faith permitted. The Law applied fairly, speedily and tempered with mercy.

Such a Government is coming! The Creator has only

One True Church?... cont'd

various days dedicated to angelic beings. All such are late additions to the unchanging Word and borrowed from non-Christian practice.

God's Gold Standard

It may come as a surprise, then, that *none* of the beliefs listed above may be found in God's only standard - the Bible. Jesus through His apostles passed on the Father's teachings. Wrote Jude: '*...contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints*' (Jude v.3).

Since the inspired words of the first-century apostles the fundamentals of the true faith remain - unchanged. Research them for yourself! Since the Bible is God's standard something is clearly wrong when all these churches are at odds with it. A *cult* has been defined as a group that plays fast and loose with the Scriptures. Where does that leave even mainstream churches!

If you desire to be in 'the true church' then the solution is clear: *search the Scriptures*. And with a mind willing to accept what you find there: '*...you shall call on Me, and you shall go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you shall seek and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart*' (Jeremiah 29:12-13).

The 'true church' is to be found scattered worldwide. It resides in individuals. In small groups of two or three. In independent assemblies. In larger denominations. None has a monopoly of truth, but those who love - submit to - the unchanging Word of God and whose daily walk reflects the mind of the Saviour are part of that one church.

The true church, in other words, is not an organization but that worldwide spiritual Body composed of those in whom dwells the Spirit of God.

"Freedom has failed in some countries because their people slept. It is commonplace for people who were fighting against us in recent wars to excuse themselves on two grounds: they didn't realize what was happening to their government, and there was nothing they could do but obey orders

"Tyranny degrades both those who exercise it and those who allow it."

RBC Letter

Where To?

Where then can you fellowship? Find a faithful group of like-minded brethren, learn from them, share your own insights, commit to them and support them. But realize that not one such group is perfect and is composed of sinful men and women saved by the Father's mercy. Just like us. [Ω](#)

Read the related articles:
**The Small Church
On Church Governance
CGOM in Perspective**

leased His Lordship over all the Earth to mankind for a limited period. To the degree nations apply good government we benefit - personally and nationally. And the converse applies. Personally and nationally to the degree we fail to obey the divine Law - in health and hygiene, in economics, in our justice, in our religion - that failure bears adverse consequences. As in the past, it will lead to destruction. [Ω](#)

CGOM August Letter

Dear Friends and Brethren

The time for the annual Autumn Festivals - Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles and the Last Great Day - is just a few weeks ahead. There is still time to make arrangements to attend with other believers on these Holy Days, either locally or by traveling to a more distant site.

The great importance of the Holy Days is the information they give us about God's plan of salvation and the understanding of current events, as they relate to the time-frame of that plan. As we consider all the worsening things happening in the world today, we must conclude that we are rapidly entering the period of those events portrayed in the Bible, for this present end-time dispensation.

Only those who are observing the Holy Days are able to fully appreciate them, and understand what God is doing in the world during the next few years. This will help us to be fortified with the knowledge necessary to guide us in righteous living that is pleasing to our Heavenly Father and Jesus.

We encourage everyone to keep the coming Festival of Tabernacles, and the other related Holy Days, at one of the many sites located throughout the world. For information about our CGOM-associated Festival sites, contact us at any of our addresses.

If you cannot "go to the Feast" then by all means observe it in your own home. For helpful articles on how to do this, and details about the Holy Days, request the information by mail or through our website www.cgom.org.

All who lovingly and obediently observe these God-directed Holy Days know the special blessings of worship, praise, inspiration, knowledge, fellowship and wholesome fun that accompanies this unique once a year experience of keeping His Fall Festivals.

Sincerely,

Churches of God Outreach Ministries

"Sociologists call this the era of hyper-individualism – and with good reason, according to our latest report. Interviews with more than 4000 adults show that we generally see ourselves as independent thinkers, loyal and reliable, and making a positive difference in the world. We support traditional family values but we are open to considering new moral perspectives. And while our faith is very important in our lives, it may not be very influential in our decision-making."

Barna Report

Where Is Your Security?

There's a belief in some religious groups that they have a special standing with God, that He has a special blessing for them simply because they have a particular understanding of certain Scripture texts.

All Bible-believing Christians, of course, are spiritually blessed, and beyond measure. By virtue of our relationship, through His indwelling Spirit, with the Father and His Son we have an assured future beyond the grave - resurrected to an endless productive life. Daily as we now walk with Him we are encouraged, supported, comforted - throughout whatever life throws at us - including martyrdom. And when we stray He lovingly sets our feet back on the path to life.

For some Christians persecution - even death - was predicted by Jesus. Yet that's clearly for the strong. The weak - the so-called 'Laodiceans' - by definition lack the faith to withstand persecution, and we have the sure promise that *'...God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it'*.

If, then, our Father wishes to protect all His people in one place - then the message will be universal and not confined to particular self-serving denominations.

*Request the article: **Do You Want Safety?***

Do you lead Bible-oriented Christians?

Following the pattern of the early church, a few Christians get together and form an assembly. As the group grows it is important to have some structure and an understanding of key issues.

For example, how were the first local assemblies structured? What if you are asked to conduct a funeral, or a wedding? Do you need a 'code of ethics'? How do you select and appoint the group's leadership? How can you become equipped to lead a Bible study?

The *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* have published a series of *Guidelines* designed to help with these tasks. They are available on our website (www.cgom.org) to view or download. Print versions are also available on request.

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