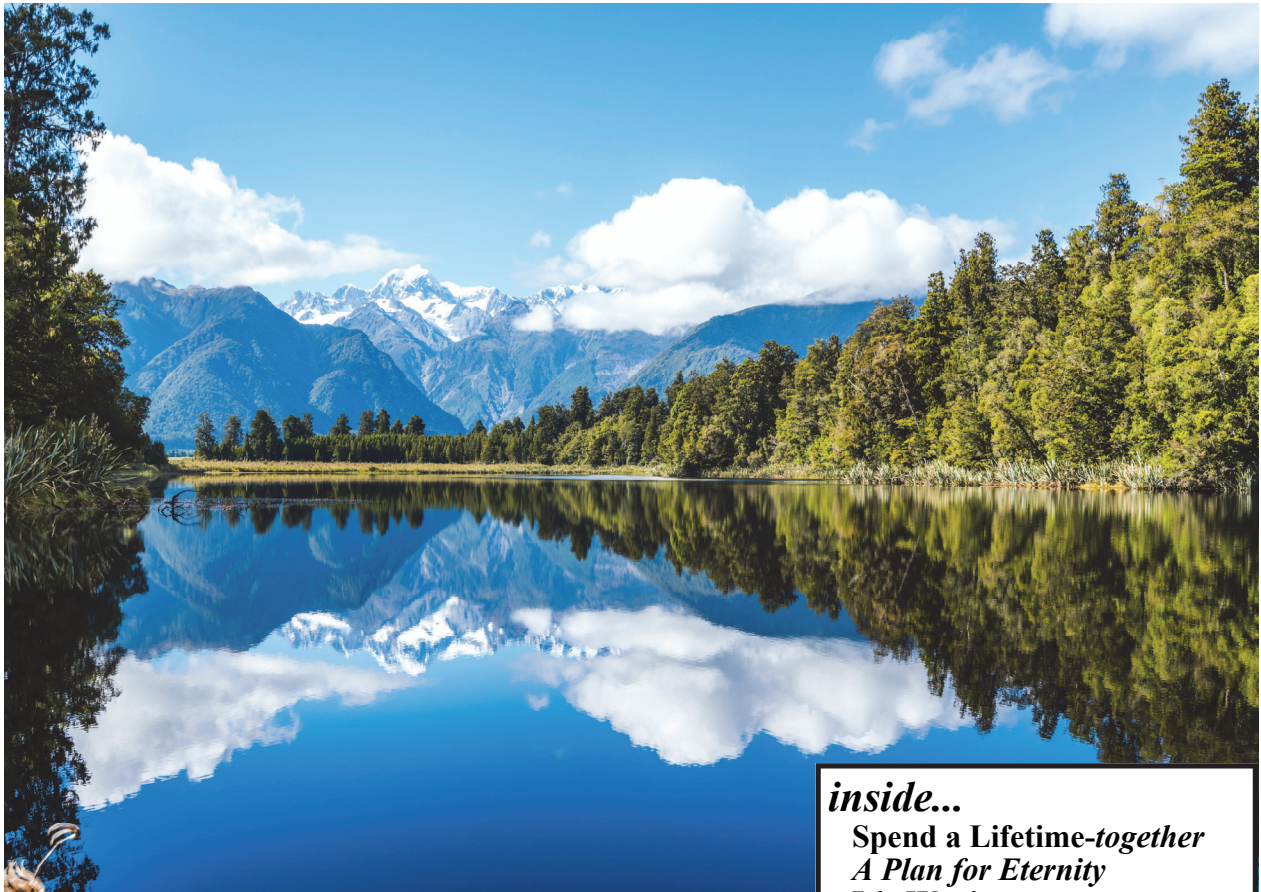


new Horizons

Vol 26 No 3

May/June 2022

addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



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CGOM

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

With around two thousand Christian denominations vying for your attention, it's easy to miss the important issues of life and religion. It's our hope that through *New Horizons* our readers will come to understand the true meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel was proclaimed by Jesus and by his apostles in terms clear to those who have 'ears to hear' - and recorded for us in the Scriptures. Over the centuries that truth has been buried, dug up, buried again. Our desire is to restore the simple apostolic message. We hope you will be excited by what the Scriptures reveal about life, and the horizons beyond.

Who We Are

The *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* is an international association of independent local assemblies - Christians who meet together for worship, instruction in the faith and fellowship. Each assembly is self-governing according to Bible principles, but co-operates through our Conference with other like-minded assemblies to work towards agreed evangelistic goals.

These goals are within the framework of the commission set for his church by Jesus: "...going, therefore, disciple all nations, baptising them...and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). He further commanded that we "...Shepherd...[and] feed my sheep".

To these ends we publish Bible-based literature—eg our bi-monthly Newsletter **OUTREACH, NEW HORIZONS** magazine, the **BIBLE BASICS** on-line home study course, and a 32-lesson **STUDY COURSE**.

The *Outreach Ministries* also supports a network of Independent fellowships and scattered brethren.

We cordially invite all independent fellowships of whatever size - and individuals - to associate with us in this worldwide ministry. Our *Statement of Beliefs* and a *Publications Catalogue* is available from any of our addresses or from our web site **www.cgom.org**. We are pleased to offer you, without charge, any of our publications.

New Horizons is published by the *Churches of God Outreach Ministries*, an association of independent churches, to make known the good news of the soon-coming Kingdom of God

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If you would like a copy of our *Statement of Beliefs* or a *Publications List* please request it from any of the addresses listed or go to our website: **www.cgom.org**

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new Horizons

Issue No 153

May/June 2022

Too many marriages are falling apart. Underpin yours - and make it a success - with strong foundations

Church calendars overflow with wedding appointments. Blushing brides daily adorn the feature columns of small towns and cities. The long-lived traditional marriage is still desired by most young people despite the so-called "sexual revolution". The "golden" or "diamond" anniversary celebrates solid achievement - and by any standard such marriages can be resounding successes.

Yet marriages continue to

flounder. Divorce is at an appallingly high level - even among Christian partners. And the resulting anguish for children, parents, relatives and friends is lamentable. Marriages even of only short duration crack and fall apart. And at the other end of the age spectrum partners of long-standing part company via the divorce courts.

Why? Is there some basic fault with the very concept of marriage? Are we expecting too much, or not enough, from marriage? Or could it be that marriages are based on wrong foundational principles?

Dispassionate investigation of the traditional monogamous union confirms in the long run that it cannot be surpassed. When it "works" it really works. All the factors of stability, security, mutual support, love, personal fulfilment are the fabric of the ideal marriage. So what goes wrong? Why don't even half of all western marriage unions last a lifetime? Why do so many couples quit?

Let's look at some of those elements of marriage which give it a sure foundation. Look at some factors for success based on God's Word.

First, what about that highly extolled virtue romantic love?

Romantic Love

"In the beginning it seems as though the lights will never dim... Every silly, silly cliché seems to have been written just for you: mouths go dry, lights flash and life is as supernaturally pretty as a chalk butterfly." That's how one psychologist describes the concept of romantic love. She continues, "*Today it is considered more or less immoral to marry for any other reason*".

It gives marriage a rosy glow. Every mundane task tackled together has a romantic aura. Washing up, decorating, shampooing the carpet, mending the burst water-pipe - all are enveloped in a haze of delight.

Alas, such ecstasy tends to fade. Ten years on, perhaps ten weeks, the romance is swamped in a morass of worldly cares. There's the realisation that both partners have firmly entrenched personality traits that seem irreconcilable. Time, once your own, must now be shared with a growing family. Then there are your partner's special friends and interests, and what is often viewed as an unreasonable attachment to parents. There are differences of approach both religious and philosophical which before marriage endowed an air of mystery, but which later provoke contention and controversy. Financial constraints: reduced income, extra mouths, mortgage, keeping up with the neighbours, pensions - all increase the pressure. And, ultimately, there's the decay in outward physical appearance and abilities.

So romance fades.

If romance is the sole binding strand

then the reasons for staying together appear invalid. Once blissful hours in one another's company become dull and intolerable. Cracks can no longer be paved over. And many couples seek to recover the romance in a soap-opera style clandestine "affair". Indeed many marriage counsellors encourage such "therapy"!

The result? Before long, more often than not, the agony and trauma of divorce seems the only cure.

Many turn to the newspaper "agony aunt" for guidance. A thousand do-it-yourself marriage counselling books and tapes crowd the bookshop shelves. Perhaps most of those who see the impending crash of their marriages will clutch at such and for a time "work at it". Indeed it's widely recognized, and true, that even the best marriages need sustained effort to preserve them intact.

Often, though, the emphasis of such books is on recapturing the romance of marriage. All the worthy aids are promoted: the candle-lit meal, the bouquet of roses, the new dress or hair-style, the romantic night out, making yourself "more interesting".

Romance, of course, ought to persist and be nourished in every marriage. It's essential for all-round success, and marriage cannot thrive in its absence. But romance is the "icing on the cake".

Let's look at some of the other factors vital to a successful marriage.

Mutual Support

An ancient wise saying extols the virtues of joint commitment and companionship. "...two are better than one" said King Solomon, "...because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has

not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together they are warm; but how can one be warm alone? And though a man prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him. A three-fold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

In the context of marriage the implications of this are clear. A husband and wife totally committed to one another can provide mutual support in times of stress, both from internal challenges and from without. A third strand, divine help or perhaps a child or the extended family, can increase the resilience of a growing family. So, when the inevitable illness strikes, or economic reverse (we all have our "winters"), the family can rally to provide material help and an emotional boost. Properly viewed, illness or economic adversity is a shared experience which in the family setting can bind and not destroy. Unlike mere co-habitation there's not the same temptation to "throw in the towel".

Heart-rending disappointment stemming, for example, from the collapse of a mutually-cherished project can be smoothed and overcome by the combined resilience of two people in close harmony. And the interplay of minds united in common purpose can provide strong impetus towards the achieving of family goals or a shared vision. Two, indeed, are better than one!

Traditional marriage with its lifetime commitment provides a contractual bond not possible in a more permissive arrangement. To encourage permanence frail human nature needs the framework of exchanged vows. And perhaps they should be written down, witnessed and signed! Without such a framework couples have a convenient bolt-hole to escape personal responsibility if they so wish when the going gets tough. As it inevitably will.

Companionship

True love and marriage is a partnership. It is companionship. In the first unveiling of the marriage bond God

said "*It is not good that a man should be alone*" - an observation that belongs equally to women. Eve was created a companion for Adam. And vice versa. The husband is termed "*...the companion of her youth*" (Proverbs 2:17) and the wife is "*...your companion and your wife by covenant*" (Malachi 2:14).

The Hebrew word for "companion" expresses a close personal relationship. In marriage a man and a woman are to become intimately united in body, purpose, thoughts, goals - "*...one flesh*".

Few marriages, sadly, implement this concept. All too often the idea of partnership, of companionship, of the combination of husband-wife mind-power, of a shared dream or vision is ignored and the union is impoverished. But when the marriage begins with the sure understanding that companionship is a vital pillar of the relationship, then this concept becomes a powerful force which encourages a permanent bond.

Every Christian man and woman considering marriage ought to thoroughly discuss with one another (and possibly with their pastor) this important principle. It must be up-front in their preparations for marriage.

Then, when adversity strikes, they will understand that together they can share the misfortune, sustain the wounded spirit and gain the victory. The interplay of two minds united in common purpose is vital to overcome adversity.

Build A Dynasty

Romance, certainly, is a factor in a lasting and happy marriage. Mutual support and companionship are vital. But there's a third factor which must have prime consideration before a marriage begins. Indeed it must rank near the top of the list of priorities in a marriage covenant.

A most distressing aspect of marital breakdown is the vexed question of "division of property" (using the word in its wider sense). This includes, vitally, the welfare of the chil-

dren. It includes the division of the previously shared home. It includes sharing chattels brought to the marriage from two family inheritances, and what was once termed "dowry". It includes the redistribution and dispersal of the material goods and assets to the next generation.

Such effects of a resort to divorce, however, are not limited to the immediate and personal emotional distress of two people and their children. The hurt and distress and confusion ripples onward in ever-increasing circles to touch parents, grandparents, friends - and future generations.

Indeed the stability of a nation can - has - as a result come under threat! In titled families each generation takes pride in its inheritance, and in preserving it for future generations. They can trace their ancestry by clear lines on a genealogical chart and by family portraits to many generations past. They thrill to exhibit the family home and lands and heirlooms, and proudly cite highlights of their history back to the early Colonial period - or even to the Conquest! They are part of an enduring dynasty. It imparts pride, status, security, authority and stability.

But divorce in the modern world dissipates family inheritance. Divorce divides family loyalties. It shatters the substance of a potentially sound building block of any society. Break up a home and creative energy is diverted from productive activity. Children are confused, their potential limited. The family suffers, the community suffers, the nation suffers.

On the other hand *you can build a dynasty*. By lifting your eyes beyond an introspective notion of romantic love or mere personal fulfilment. By consciously establishing your small family unit as a foundation stone of a future "house". By instilling in your family a pride of achievement and vision. By setting aside short-term desires and building now for the future. By these

LIFETIME...cont'd from p.2

means you can build an enduring dynasty and your marriage will take on greater stability.

The idea is much neglected in our day. Yet anciently it was written into every godly marriage. So important is it that the Creator legislated detailed laws of inheritance when establishing His model nation of Israel some three thousand five hundred years ago.

Marriage can survive for a time on romantic love, but all too often and too soon that bubble bursts. An enduring marriage demands more substance. For an enduring, fulfilling marriage each couple must strenuously weave strong bonds of mutual interests and companionship. There must be a compassionate legal framework for the union. And essentially the guiding vision of combining two different historic human streams into a single mighty river flowing into the years ahead. *An enduring dynasty.*

A Vital Dimension

But this is not the whole story. There is yet a further dimension to marriage that must not be omitted if lasting success is to be achieved. For, to resolve the challenges that arise in marriage can at times require help that transcends human counselling abilities. There remains an element to marriage which alone imparts true stability and perspective.

Because marriage is not merely a human institution.

The Creator God instituted monogamous marriage. Does He have any say in who you should marry? Or even if you should? Is marriage simply one life-style among many? What about 'singles'? Ought you to marry outside your "race" - or your religion? Is God concerned about such ground-rules for marriage? Do they matter?

What does God think of divorce? Is there any place for divorce as a "solution" to an unravelling Chris-

tian marriage? And are there inspired guidelines for solving the challenges of married life?

Crash Course

In sum, if you want to spend a lifetime together

- Before marriage make sure you spend enough time getting to know your prospective life partner
- Always nourish the romance in your marriage
- Learn to share goals and interests
- Develop close bonds of companionship
- Focus on the long-term: build an enduring dynasty
- Be prepared to work together diligently for marriage success
- *Above all, ensure God is at the head and heart of the marital table* Ω

related articles:

Divorce..for Christians?

University of the Home

Marriage...the best option

War...cont'd

family, neighbours, colleagues, the churches and even well-meaning friends).

But we have God's weapons: truth, right behaviour, the gospel, the 'shield of faith' '...' (Ephesians 6:14-17).

Now, in these volatile times, we must learn to deploy these weapons on a daily basis, knowing He that is in us is greater than all the devil can throw at us. Ω

Quotations from the Bible in New Horizons are from translations which clearly express the meaning in modern terms if in accord with the KJV

War! ...cont'd from p.5

Thus every effort is made by educational establishments, by the entertainment media, by government to undermine the family from the cradle to the grave. Marriage is not promoted and protected as the bed-rock of a stable society. Illogical (given its God-given purpose) same-sex 'marriage' is legalized and enshrined as 'good'.

Incessant media propaganda coupled with the decline in religion has undermined public moral values inducing widespread acceptance of such destructive attitudes.

In face of this devilish onslaught Christians are in grave danger. Jesus warned that *'...because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold'* (Matthew 24:13). He added: *'...But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved'*. *We are at war!*

God's Armour

But we are well-armed, with an endless supply of the heavy-duty spiritual weaponry essential to the battle: Writes Paul: *'...For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds'* (II Corinthians 10:4).

The brethren in Ephesus had been apprised of the dangers from these spirit opponents. The apostle details the weapons available to each Christian: *'...Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places'* (ch 6:11-12).

Acting through the institutions of this world—governments, education, finance, entertainment media—the devil deploys his deceptive weaponry: *lies* (can you believe the media?), *deceit* (what we are fed by the authorities), *violence* (from *previous column*

A Plan for Eternity

Life has purpose. All mankind is given the opportunity for a productive endless future life

The gift of life is precious—and full of potential, not just for the privileged and prosperous but for all of mankind. And not only the Christianized West but for mankind of every nation, of every era since creation.

Since creation billions have embarked on life's journey—too often for a brief three or four decades (often less) encounter with life before returning to dust. It is more often than not a struggle marred by disease, disability, conflict and, too often, disappointment. But—*we are born to live for ever!*

Prior to the material creation a grand design was being devised in the realms of spirit, a plan that would prepare physical beings to live productively for eternity. By divine fiat a perfectly-matched duo—a man and a woman—were created, specifically designed to physically multiply and equipped with a spirit implant that could relate to the Creator: *'... God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them'* (Genesis 1:27). We are born to become true 'children of God'.

A Process

Humanity and the lower creation are 'cut from the same cloth'—earth's elements. All are endowed with 'spirit', the driving force that imparts life. The spirit in man, however, imparts a higher level of life enabling rational life beyond the animal instinct and, crucially, with access to the divine plan for eternity.

Beyond our inborn physiology life is driven by conscious decisions, for we are endowed with the ability to choose our path in life, to decide.

Choice

God has from the beginning made clear His existence and set out that path—he has not been without witness. The Christian Scriptures are the record of the process He has since followed, summed up as *'...choose you this day whom you will serve'*.

Man, however, has embarked on a course of self-will: *'I'll do it my way'*, and compliance has been limited to the few—men such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, and all who have given themselves to bearing witness to the divine plan—a plan we know as 'the Gospel of Jesus Christ'.

That 'good news' is the message that physical mankind can, through Jesus Christ alone, become part of the spirit Family of God

As is said of Abraham: *'... he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God'* (Hebrews 11:10). An eternal existence: *'...For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come'* (ch 13:14).

This same gospel will be proclaimed worldwide as a continuing witness through to the end times. It may be spurned by the majority, but those who embrace it and remain faithful will fulfil life's purpose and be raised from their grave to become a part of the Family of God—truly and fully 'children of God'.

God's Choice

Over the millennia that He has assigned to complete this phase

End-time Overview

The end-time is marked by the last-gasp but short-lived attempt of the devil to rule mankind and to mobilize them against the returning Messiah—the rightful Ruler.

Faithful Christians will be severely persecuted and many martyred. They will be resurrected to reign under Christ.

Millions of mankind who don't repent but submit to the devil's rule will be enlisted to battle Jesus and many will be killed—though many will survive to repopulate the nations through the millennium under Christ's reign.

The surviving but repentant remnant of the Israelite nations will be restored to their former land, with apostolic oversight, throughout the millennium.

of His plan, God has chosen those who respond to His invitation. Over their life-span they overcome the dark forces that seek to turn them away from the true path, and upon death their spirit remains in His care awaiting a resurrection to spirit life.

The opportunity for a perfect endless life is there—for you.

Grasp it!

Ω

'It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.'

You are invited to read these short articles:

What Do You Mean ...'Repent'

Should You Be Baptized?

Guidelines for Your Baptism

IT'S WAR!

Conflict is endemic in our race, '...Nature red in tooth and claw' applies as much to humanity as to the lower creatures

From that first fratricidal murder through millennia of human savagery mankind has often obtained his desires through violence. Our pristine creation was soon overturned by the deception of spirit forces. And the first truly human family was torn asunder by internal conflict. Our in-born 'law f love' was all but submerged by our rejection of the path designed by the Creator. The way we chose we call *sin*.

Man was born with the option of choice but, aided and abetted by that same agent of deception, has since chosen 'my way'. *We are at war with him!* Our in-born animal nature, though tempered by our rational 'spirit in man', will always satisfy the self by whatever means necessary.

This God-implanted human spirit has been corrupted by our sin.

Originally in God's image man retains his original moral sense, his awareness of God, his appreciation of his environment his creative urges—though increasingly corrupted, and prone to submit to the wiles of the devil. By our spirit we for the most part restrain our lightly-veiled animal nature.

At War

Created as an 'angel of God' and holding high office Satan in his pride had aspired to equality with God, and when he enters the human domain had been restricted to Earth and its environment. He

is '...the prince of the power of the air' Ephesians 2:2). And, '...God did not spare angels when they had sinned, but hurling them down to Tartarus [a condition of restraint] consigned them to caves of darkness, keeping them in readiness for judgement. (II Peter 2:4).

Devilish plan

He and his angels - now disembodied restless spirits - know they face judgement for their opposition to God. They gain expression only through a living body: '...When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, I will return into my house from whence I came out' (Matthew 12:43-44).

As one of the 'anointed cherubs' (Ezekiel 28:14) the Devil now commands these 'angels that sinned' (II Peter 2:4) and opposes God and His plan for mankind, now being worked out through Jesus. By means of his deception the devil has hidden God's plan from mankind: '...the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them' (II Corinthians 4:4).

Since the beginning Satan has sought to overturn God's grand design - first by his defeat of Adam, then by opposing all God's witnesses through the ages, and by his attacks on the nation of Israel by devious means. He sought—through Herod—to destroy Jesus at his birth and was then defeated in his attempts in the wilderness to cause him to sin.

His final defeat came when, acting through Judas and the Jewish leaders, having caused his death Jesus was restored from death and, ...*declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the [his] resurrection from the dead*' (Romans 1:4). The apostle notes: '...that through death he [Jesus] might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil' (Hebrews 2:14).

Why Satan?

It may seem strange that God would allow the devil to rampage among mankind creating mayhem and interfering in His purpose. In effect He is testing mankind.

By analogy, when a business seeks to introduce a new computer programme it employs 'testers' to probe its potential weaknesses before general release.

The LORD tested Israel similarly: '...to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments, or no' (Deuteronomy 8:2; see also Exodus 16:4, II Chronicles 32:31).

One in Christ

Our moral sense, our conscience, motivates us in some degree to resist the pull of our lower nature. We are in a sense at war with it. There is, however, a greater, a more subtle, battle we wage day in and day out—with the devil.

The apostle Peter warns us: '...Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith' (I Peter 5:8-9). Cast out of heaven he unleashes his anger [Gk. *thumon*; boiling rage] on mankind evident from the destructive power unleashed through human activity.

His main concern, however, is with those who are 'in Christ'. Christians are one with him and they share in the devil's ire against the Saviour. Every human institution has been infiltrated by him and his angels, their efforts devoted to destroying all that Christian teaching promotes.

cont'd p3

What Is Truth?

Famously, our title is the question Pilate asked Jesus when arraigned before him. Are we any closer to an answer?

The bed-rock reply from the Christian viewpoint is, of course, *'...your word is truth'*. All that God says, all that He is, cannot be shaken. It is one hundred percent trustworthy, reliable. His promises (no matter how we misunderstand them), His prophetic statements, His actions among us—all are based on truth.

Not that our institutions—education, business, media and even our churches—truly believe it. For most the Scriptures are 'old hat', a relic of the past, an irrelevance. Yet they are the foundation of a sound society, and institutions built on any other are destined to crumble.

'My Truth'

Now, supported by 'royalty', we have 'my truth'—truth is how I see it no matter how far adrift from being anchored to reality.

On the world stage it is increasingly clear that the truth is distorted on several fronts. One example is that the number of covid deaths has been a huge exaggeration leading to disastrous effects—excessive lockdowns, school closures, mask and vaccine-induced illness, widespread fear and family division.

Then there is the current deception of the Russian people about their government's 'special operation' in Ukraine, *aka* war. The number of Russian military deaths and the lack of progress is grossly under-reported to the Russian populace. In war, truth is the first casualty.

Omission

Truth can also be distorted by omission. Widely unreported are the on-going massacres in Yemen (377,000 killed by Saudis and by civil war). In Syria the ten-year war has to date seen the violent deaths of over 600,000 and displaced millions.

Closer to home are such scandals as the deliberate hiding of hospital deaths through medical negligence and neglect in care homes. During the pandemic it emerges that truth was distorted as to the true toll of those who succumbed.

Religious Deception

Distortion of the truth, however, is not limited to the secular, for over Christendom their hangs a dark cloud of deception. Most representatives of the faith may be sincere in what they teach their flock but they have become entangled in a wilderness of false doctrine thus blinding them and their flock to the narrow way that leads to eternal life.

Not many centuries passed after the resurrection of Jesus before the church leadership distorted his message by introducing popular ancient customs and doctrines—ideas akin to the pagan teachings and practices so familiar in today's mainstream Christianity—*eg* Christmas, Easter, Sunday. Truth suffered.

Indeed despite elements of truth *all* religions have succumbed to the devilish deception that blinds the world to the pure faith so clearly demonstrated by Jesus. In his closing guidance to his disciples he solemnly warned: *'...Take heed that no man deceive you.'* (Matthew 24:5). It applies to all those institutions that seek to manipulate us by burying the truth. **Ω**

Holy...cont'd from p.7 Divine Standards

But how do we know God's standard of morality? Jesus gives an answer: *'...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'* (Matthew 4:4). He directs us for our lifestyle guide to *'...the word of God'*.

That was his model, and with that model before us we - empowered by the Spirit - can modify our behaviour. If you have access to the Christian Scriptures you may readily compile a list of spiritual objectives!

We are in some degree bound by our habits. Indeed, life would be intolerable without the God-given ability to learn, practice and do many activities unthinkingly.

But ingrained habitual patterns of behaviour - many sinful - die hard, with or without the help of the Spirit. But, writes John: *'...If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'* (1 John 1:8-9). And to Moses: *'...The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth'* (Deuteronomy 4:31). And that's the foundation of holiness.

Fruits of the Spirit

Anciently, agriculture was 'the bread of life' for the average Israelite, and farming analogies are frequent in the Scriptures. James, for instance: *'...the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, (ch 5:7)*. Apply that to the 'fruits of the Spirit'. They capture a glimpse, a snapshot, of God's character, His holiness - and are the characteristics to which Christians aspire.

Like the fruits of the earth, following our baptism they don't develop instantaneously as some misunderstand. No. The Father gives the increase by carefully tending their growth in each Christian throughout their remaining lifespan. **Ω**

Take Time to be Holy!

The idea of 'holiness' has become tangled with notions of halos and monks and hermits and a 'saintly demeanour'. The 'holy person' lives separate from the world - in a monastery, a nunnery. They are perceived as other worldly, consuming their time in prayer or religious ritual. Your local vicar or minister or Imam - and certainly the Pope - may also be generally so considered. In reality, holiness is more down-to-earth.

Saint is the Bible synonym for a Christian. That is, a man or woman in whom dwells the holy Spirit: *'...You are no longer ruled by your desires, but by God's Spirit, who lives in you. People who don't have the Spirit of Christ in them don't belong to him' (Romans 8:9 CEV)*. The term doesn't imply the 'holy one', the 'saint', is what is popularly called 'sainted'! That individual is perfect only in the degree to which he or she reflects the character of Jesus.

Holiness applies not only to humans but also to objects, places *etc.*. The Scriptures talk of 'holy ground', of 'holy assemblies', of 'holy Sabbath', of 'holy garments', of 'holy gifts'. The Hebrew term is *qodesh*. It simply means - in line with the above definition - something *separated, set apart* for God's service.

Notice. It is *God* who determines what is and is not holy. In establishing the formal worship of His holy nation (Exodus 19:6) the LORD minutely detailed the form and dimensions of the Tabernacle. He gave the templates for each holy garment, each instrument, each sacrifice. Deviation resulted in dire consequences - *eg* Leviticus 10:1-2. Not some capricious 'act of God' but a demonstration of His own inherent holiness - to which we, as our destiny, are to aspire: *'...the Scriptures say, "I am the holy God, and you must be holy too" (1 Peter 1:16)*.

This has implications for the day-to-

day life of all who profess to serve the one Creator God.

Worldly Contrast

Most folk - even the irreligious - lead reasonably moral lives. We go about our business aware of our impact on others, and often act 'the good Samaritan'. Some, strongly influenced by a Christian ethic as detailed in the Bible, lead positively fine lives. Without such our society would sink to the level of those who oppress their nation, their employees, their neighbour.

That influence, sadly is on the wane. The bed-rock of society, stable marriage, has been undermined by false socialist principles imposed from the top. Sound principles of living are suppressed, and pre-school children subjected to amoral 'ethics'..

The divide between Christ-like behaviour and what passes for morality was recently highlighted by a judgment in the British High Court. The case was a libel action by a high profile sporting light - a married man - against a newspaper which exposed his grotesque sado-masochism and involvement with prostitutes. The judgement went against the newspaper on the grounds of invasion of privacy. In effect, the Judge set down in British Law, for the first time, that morality is neutral. Do what you like in private as long as no-one gets hurt, is the theme. (Though how 'hurt' is his family?)

Contrast that with the teaching of Jesus. He taught that his followers would stand out from the crowd - but in a vastly different manner.

You are, he said, like a hill-top city - visible to all. You are a light in a dark place. Not that we are capped by halos or carry religious regalia. It's our *behaviour* that sets us apart, makes us 'holy'. Such a lifestyle could be summed up in the life of Job: *'...There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright,*

and one that feared God, and turned away from evil' (Job 1:1). Along with Noah and Daniel he was singled out from mankind for this righteousness (Ezekiel 14:20). Hear is God's verdict: *'...Have you considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and turns away from evil' (v.8)*. He was, in New Testament terms a *saint*.

That's the lifestyle to which every true Christian, whatever his or her shortcomings, aspires!

A Christian Life

How, then would you recognize a Christian? Note that Christianity isn't a list of 'do's and don'ts' (though some make it so.) Having entered into covenant with Jesus through repentance (a determination to change) and baptism God then imparts His holy Spirit. This is an implant of the divine nature: *'... his divine power has granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he has granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust' (II Peter 1:3-4)*.

That's why the Christian is 'holy' - God's holy Spirit indwells us, His nature. We are set apart for a divine purpose, and from that moment on we, as His sons and daughters, work to become perfect. Not that we become perfect on our own, but with that 'divine power' that Peter describes we can escape the kind of corruption mentioned above. Our goal is to reflect the character of Jesus - who himself behaved exactly as would our, and his, Father. So, 'moral neutrality' for the Christian is not an option. Having become part of His spirit Kingdom we are motivated by the Spirit to imitate Jesus.

[Note: if we have God's Spirit in us we are already part of the divine Family. That is not a goal to strive for but a present reality.] *cont'd p.6*

Reflections on a Festival

On an early spring evening in ancient Corinth, as the sun was sinking in the western sky, a raucous party disturbed the neighbours. Unbelievably it was an assembly of Christians there to celebrate a festival. An observer reported that some of the brethren were drunk, some overindulging in the festive fare—while others made do with poorer food.

This activity (and other disorderly conduct) reached the ears of the man who had established the assembly some years before. It shocked him, energizing him to write a strong corrective letter. It was, of course, the apostle Paul and the occasion was the celebration by the churches in Corinth of the death of the Saviour—the ‘*Lord’s Supper*’.

Paul’s ire was kindled by the clear lack of respect the Corinthians were expressing for what was perhaps the most solemn of ordinances, the remembrance of their Saviour and his death.

Passover (many of the brethren had been Jewish) was a celebration of their freedom from Egyptian bondage and merited joyful partying as well as remembrance of their bondage in Egypt. *This*, the ‘*Lord’s Supper*’ was different, for its focus was on remembrance of a person. And not an ordinary person but the Saviour, the Son of God and the one who had brought them together in that place.

In Corinth at that time the church had not been torn apart by controversy on the date for this observance. Paul makes it clear: they met ‘...on the night in which he [ie Jesus] was betrayed’ (1 Corinthians 11:23). It was the night before the Passover.

The disciples had gathered for a meal (Gk *deipnos*; not *pasch*) and had later retired to the garden on the Mount of Olives. Jesus was arrested and suffered extreme abuse culminating in his murder by crucifixion next morning.

By observing the simple ceremony Jesus introduced to them (the *bread* and ‘*the cup*’) they annually brought this to remembrance, showing publicly that they had committed themselves to him and all he represented. It is a yearly re-commitment, a renewal of the Christian’s covenant with him.

The brethren in Corinth thus assembled to observe this memorial of the Saviour. The next evening the Jews would have gathered for Passover. They had slain the lamb and were commanded to eat it on the 15th of the month at sundown—the first holy day of the seven-day *Unleavened Bread* festival (called ‘Passover’ (Like 22:1).

Jesus, however, was the fulfilment of that sacrifice of ‘...a lamb without blemish’: ‘...Christ our Passover is sacrificed for [instead of] us’ (1 Corinthians 5:7). But the lessons of *Unleavened Bread* remain relevant, and Christians continued, as at Corinth and with Paul’s guidance, to observe the seven days by daily eating unleavened bread (v.8).

It is an practice maintained to this day by the church of God. **Ω**

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unsigned articles are by the Editor

The Calendar

The Calendar of the Scriptures was widely used in the Middle East and beyond. The year began in Spring, the first month being Abib (*aka* Nisan)—our March/April.

Day and Night

Anciently, ‘day’ began at sundown—when the sun visibly began its decline in the afternoon sky. The period from 3pm until dark was called in the Scriptures ‘...between the two evenings’.

Evening

This term (Heb *ereb*) refers to this latter period—ie the end of the day. It is illustrated in several texts. Referring to *Atonement* (observed the 10th of 7th month): ‘...in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall you celebrate your sabbath’ (Leviticus 23:32). (It began at the end of the 9th [Hen ‘ereb].)

Re Passover (14th Nisan ‘at even’): ‘...you shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even’ (Exo dus 12:18). The churches of God observe the 21st Nisan (this year April 22) as the last (7th) day of *Unleavened Bread*.

[For reference: This year, 2022, the *Supper* was on the 15th April, and the Jewish *Passover* was on the 16th]

Jesus died ‘...at the ninth hour’ (3-4pm; Matthew 27:46-50) the time of the evening sacrifice in the Temple. The Passover lamb was officially sacrificed at that time.

Unleavened Bread was seven days of feasting and animal sacrifice. Jesus expressed disappointment at not sharing it with them that year.

THE GREAT GLOBAL RESET

It's coming! The world's present economic, social, religious structures will be overturned, all its institutions replaced by a new benign world order, a great global reset, the outcome an orderly, peaceful and prosperous community of interdependent free nations.

Read behind the news headlines, however, and we uncover advanced plans to 'make the world a better place' for the 'common good' - but in ways that ignore the fundamental principles that underpin good governance. A plan that, if ever implemented, can do so only by strict authoritarian control.

That reset is pioneered by the *United Nations* and the *World Economic Forum (WEF)* the Founder of which, Klaus Schwab, said: '*The pandemic represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine and reset our world*'. It has been approved by nearly every nation and welcomed by leaders in all fields of endeavour, and bears the imprimatur of the Vatican.

A Chaotic World

The increasing interconnection of our world—education, economic, social, religious, health, transport—has spawned the desire for global solutions. Given that the world 'ship' is rudderless—*ie* rejecting divine guidance—our leaders apply well-meant humanly devised but flawed solutions which often conflict with our love of freedom. Hence the need for governments to implement them with force.

Schwab's 're-set', faced with human nature, demands draconian measures of control. Fear-induced passive acceptance has paved the way to a dystopian globalism.

The Great Reset

Such human endeavour may, *for the few*, provide relative stability—but for a brief time. It represents mankind's final rebellion against God and Satan's last-ditch attempt to overthrow God's plans. And it will herald His direct intervention when the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus, returns in majestic power to re-set humanity, to

sweep away every evil influence.

Man was created to represent the Godhead—the Kingdom of God—as Earth's Ruler, a role Adam yielded to the Devil by subscribing to his lies and rejecting God's guidance in Eden. Satan became the '*god of this world*', its ruler. Jesus had covenanted with the Father that if Adam failed He would take on human flesh and by living sinlessly would qualify to overthrow the rule of Satan, the Devil—a role Jesus triumphantly fulfilled. The return of Jesus as King of kings resets the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Restored

Fundamental to the new world order will be the universal knowledge that God exists. We will have by then learned our les-

son. Chastened by the overwhelming crisis at the close of man's tenure of the planet the remnant of mankind will in contrition willingly submit to divine rule and will embrace the Gospel message as it is then proclaimed in every nation.

The world's former vanquished ruler and 'god' will be banished, his evil influence removed and Messiah will reign over all the earth. Believers from every age will be restored to life to reign with Him, and will, under Christ, administer the laws of the Kingdom. As His children they are heirs of the Father: '*...if children, also heirs; truly heirs of God, and joint-heirs of Christ*' (Romans 8:17).

The long-planned man-made (and devil inspired) global government, will be swiftly overthrown by the returning King of kings and LORD of lords, and the world fully re-set—on His terms. Ω

The Money Balloon

As a child I could travel several miles into town by bus for half of an 'old penny', and 'sixpence' bought my weekly comic and sweets. The home in which I grew up cost £450 (new), and an Aunt paid seven shillings and sixpence weekly rent. My Dad had a good income of £40 per week and we lived comfortably. The Bank of England calculates that as £350 today—so what happened? (Today's average wage is £584.)

In 1978 a gallon of petrol was 75p, and today hovers around £7+. That's inflation, and it averages over 5% annual increase with some years being much higher. During wars— and in preparation for a war— when a nation borrows, inflation soars as in 1930's Germany, while by mismanagement in Zimbabwe (2008) inflation rose to two million percent. It is in effect a tax, reducing the value of savings and destroying lives—and nations. World debt has almost reached 300 trillion dollars. (Where does the interest go?).

It's a sorry fact that governments welcome inflation as, especially in times of crisis, it reduces the value

of public debt—there's less to pay back. (The current UK public debt tops *two trillion* pounds.) It is, however, devastating for those on a fixed income (*eg* pensioners) as the basic commodities inexorably rise in price. (*Remember them!*)

For those able to save for a rainy day, money committed to the bank for safe-keeping (which the banks profitably lend) draws almost zero interest—and may soon cost the saver negative interest (*ie* you pay the bank to look after it).

It is almost inevitable that the world's financial house is on the brink of collapse. It is built on the crumbling foundation of debt, greed and covetousness. Nations *may* weather this catastrophic storm—for now, but its ultimate destructive force will precipitate financial collapse (Ezekiel 7:19).

It is prudent that, when possible, we be cushioned financially and that we enjoy and use wisely the fruit of our labour. Yet we live with the knowledge that our real support is in God ('*...give us this day our daily bread*'), and that whatever resources we may have accrued is destined to be swept away in the debris of a fallen world. Ω

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