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Earnestly Fasting and Seeking God

Dear Brethren and Friends,

Once again I want to thank you for the many encouraging responses to my letter calling for a Church-wide fast on July 14, 2001. Every response I received was a positive one, and a number of you suggested that we continue to have Church-wide fasts every so often. *This is an excellent idea.* But the vast majority of fasts in each true Christian's life should be private and personal—just as the majority of our prayers must be private and personal.

However, as the true Church of God, *are we fasting regularly?* *Why should we fast regularly?* *How should we so organize ourselves that our time of fasting will produce optimal results?*

Part of the answer is found in Jesus' instruction to His disciples in Matthew 9:14: "Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?'" The clear message is that Jesus' disciples—*while He was here in the flesh*—were already "close" to Him. *Think of it.* They were literally rubbing shoulders with *God*—though in the human flesh! They were constantly seeing and hearing the one *perfect example* who has ever lived! So they did not need to fast in order to draw close to God. In the person of Jesus Christ, God was *right there* with them. But Jesus did tell them, in this passage, that after He was taken away from His disciples, "*then they will fast*" (v. 15).

Therefore we, today, in a world cut off from God, and in a society constantly distracted by sights and sounds and "things"—we *desperately need* to fast before our God in order to concentrate our minds on the *things of God!* The Apostle Paul powerfully reminds us: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1–3).

By earnestly *fasting*, by doing without food and water and *seeking God* in a special way during this time of self-abnegation, we are enabled to draw close to the invisible God—to *cry out in prayer* to God with more fervency and to humbly *meditate* on the fundamental issues of life. Remember, God tells us in His Word: "But on this one will I look: *on him*

who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2).

Dear brethren, as we approach the final years of this age, it is imperative that we all draw really close to God. If we in this “little flock” are going to complete at least *our part* of the Work of the living Christ, we profoundly need to have the great God “look on us” with favor! We need to *genuinely* “walk with God” in a very special way—being sure that we guide our thoughts and keep in a “spirit of prayer” all day long. As we do this, we will both *feel* and *see* the power of God using us even more powerfully than ever before!

We all know that the Bible is the revealed “mind of God.” In His inspired revelation, God reveals to us how *He* views things. Clearly, God was orchestrating the events described in the book of Esther. In order to counteract the imperial decree to destroy *all the Jews*, Esther and Mordecai needed a divine intervention.

So what did they do?

Queen Esther was inspired by God to tell Mordecai: “Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” (Esther 4:16).

The result?

The tables were completely turned on wicked Haman! Instead of Mordecai being hanged on the gallows, *Haman* was (Esther 7:10). Instead of all the Jews being put to shame, their *enemies* were (Esther 9:1). But, remember, this was accomplished after *several thousand* faithful Jews cried out to the God of Israel with prayer and *fasting*!

The Church-wide fast of July 14, 2001 was only the *beginning* of a powerful revival of faith and fervency that God wants this Church to experience. There *must* be many more fasts. There *must* be a deep and powerful “yearning” in the heart of God’s people to be genuinely close to Him, *filled* with His Spirit, *empowered* by His Spirit to overcome the lusts and vanities of this flesh, to *truly* “reflect” Jesus Christ in every aspect of life and to *do* the Work of God with a zeal and power never before experienced in modern times!

Remember that when Daniel needed encouragement and direction regarding the fate of his people and the Holy City, Jerusalem, he said: “Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes” (Daniel 9:3).

Describing Saul of Tarsus, struck down and totally blinded on the way to persecute the Christians at Damascus, God’s Word tells us: “And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank” (Acts 9:9).

When Jesus was about to be tempted by Satan the Devil for forty days, Luke tells us: “*In those days he ate nothing*” (Luke 4:2). So it is clear that at a time of great need, of extreme danger, and/or at a time when *God’s powerful intervention* is especially needed, true men and women of God will devote themselves to *fasting*!

To physically prepare for a fast, it is best to prepare by avoiding salty or spicy foods beforehand. Otherwise, your body will “cry out”

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- News Bureau** June Olsen

Regional Offices

UNITED STATES:
P.O. Box 501304
San Diego, CA 92150-1304
Phone: (858) 673-7470 • Fax: (858) 673-0310
<http://www.livingcog.org>

AUSTRALIA:
GPO Box 772
Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia
Phone: (07) 3841-8360 or freecall: 1800-816-543
Fax: (07) 3841-8325

CANADA:
P.O. Box 27202
Toronto, Ontario, M9W 6L0
Phone: (905) 671-3730 • Fax: (905) 671-9599

NEW ZEALAND:
P.O. Box 2767
Auckland, New Zealand
Phone/Fax: 09-435-3592

PHILIPPINES:
MCPO Box 1774
Makati City 1257, Philippines
Phone: 63-2-813-6538 • Fax: 63-2-867-1569

SOUTH AFRICA:
P.O. Box 4271, Luipaardsvlei, 1743
Republic of South Africa
Phone: (27) 11-664-6036

UNITED KINGDOM:
P.O. Box 9092
Motherwell, ML1 2YD Scotland
Phone/Fax: 44-1698-263-977

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Living FAITH

Editorial

By Roderick C. Meredith

The Eternal God has inspired me regarding the vital need for all of us to *grow in faith*. Because of all of our modern distractions, and because of the breakup of our former association, many thousands of brethren around the world have been deeply hurt or confused. Many are also disillusioned—left with the feeling that Christ “deserted” them and now they do not know where to go.

As I have previously explained, Christ did raise up the Global Church of God in early 1993, through me—just a *very few months* after the blasphemous, “God Is...” booklet came out, along with other heretical changes in doctrine. But many were not aware of Christ raising up this Church—or had been poisoned against us by vicious rumors and accusations. So, instead of *zealously searching out* and *proving* to themselves where Christ was transferring His Work, many just stayed put or even dropped away from the Truth altogether.

But—*mark this!*—the living Christ *did* give people in early 1993 a “way out”—He *did* raise up a Church with a trained, dedicated ministry of long standing who preached the full Truth and who quickly—within weeks—went on the radio, published literature and began to revive the Work. So Jesus Christ did *not* “desert” you or *anyone else*. He is still the living Head of the Church. He is alert, active and

POWERFULLY in charge of His Church and His Work! And in His great wisdom, He is now “testing” His people to see what is *really* in their hearts.

Has the splintering of God’s people been a trial? *Of course it has*. But God specifically reveals that He allows trials for our good and “tests” us through them. Notice these words of the Apostle Peter: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is *tested* by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6–7). The Apostle James was also inspired to tell us the same thing: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the *testing* of your faith produces patience” (James 1:2–3).

So all of us need to exercise *living faith* in our Head and Savior, Jesus Christ. Increasingly, we need to “see” His hand as He orchestrates world affairs to bring about the fulfillment of biblical prophecy—*often in minute detail!* We need to “see” His hand as He leads His Church—continuing to have at least one faithful group preaching the whole Truth, doing the Work and practicing the government of God, and so training its members in the *exact kind of government* we will be administering in tomorrow’s world!

Christ is ALIVE! He has *not* gone off and left His Church! He is *not* the

author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Therefore each of us needs to BELIEVE Christ! When He makes a *promise* in His inspired Word, we need to BELIEVE!

Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7). We do need to saturate our minds with the Word of God—to learn to *think as Christ thinks*. Then His Words will “abide” in us as we pray, and we will ask *according to His will*. For as the Apostle John also wrote, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14–15).

Additionally, remember Jesus’ powerful promise in Mark 11:23–24: “For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”

Brethren, if we as a Church “feed” on these and related scriptures, then we certainly will begin to build “an atmosphere of faith” in the Living Church of God. Also,

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Are You a Person After God's Own Heart?

By Douglas S. Winnail

Many people have heard that David was “a man after God’s own heart.” Many also realize that we, too, should be striving to become persons after God’s own heart. But just what does that really mean? How would you *know* if you are—or are not? What can you *do* to become a person after God’s own heart? What qualities do you need to develop, and just why is this important for Christians today? In this article we will explore the subject of becoming a person after God’s own heart, and will learn *why* this is a subject that Christians *need* to understand.

A Vital Subject

Over the years we have been encouraged to draw closer to God. We have also been admonished of the need to become more unified as a Church. More recently, we have been asked to beseech God to pour out more of His Holy Spirit on His Church. There is a *crucial common factor* that underlies all three of these important endeavors. The *crucial reason* we strive to draw closer to God is so that we can become more like God in thought, word and deed. In essence, we draw closer to God so that we can become people after God’s own heart! There is also a *crucial key* to becoming more unified as a Church—having a common focus (see 1 Corinthians 1:10). If we are each focused on becoming a person after God’s own heart—focused on what is important to God—we will become more unified as a Church. There is also a *crucial factor* in receiving more of God’s Holy Spirit. We are told that God gives His Spirit “to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32). If we are all striving to obey the commandments of God, and we follow His instructions diligently, we will be meeting the *fundamental prerequisite* for receiving more of His Spirit. Becoming a person after God’s own heart is not just a nice idea; it is a *vital necessity* for anyone who is serious about being a real Christian and walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ!

Origin of the Concept

It is instructive to notice that the term “a man after God’s own heart” did not originate with David, but with Saul! It was not originally used as a compliment, but in an admonition. The Israelites wanted a physical leader as their king, like the nations around them, so God chose for them a man with impressive physical qualities. Saul was tall, handsome, from a good family and *initially humble* (see 1 Samuel 9:1–2; 10:21–27). However, when Saul became presumptuous and took liberties with God’s instruction, he lost favor with God and lost his kingship (1 Samuel 13). Samuel admonished Saul: “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God... now your kingdom shall not continue” (1 Samuel 13:13–14). Samuel told Saul that he was removed because “the LORD has sought for himself *a man after His own heart*” (v. 14). It was important to God that the leader of His chosen people was a person who shared His perspective and who would keep His commandments.

God’s instructions to Samuel in choosing Saul’s replacement are also instructive. While reviewing the sons of Jesse as possible candidates for the kingship of Israel, Samuel was told: “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature... for the LORD does not see as a man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Although David was good-looking (16:12), he was selected because he had more important qualities that God wanted in a leader. God chose David because: “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, *who will do all my will*” (Acts 13:22). Anyone who aspires to be a leader in the kingdom of God must realize that we will each be tested to see if we are really people after God’s own heart who will keep His commandments (Exodus 16:4; Proverbs 17:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:4). But what other qualities did David have that made him a man after God’s own heart? And do women need to develop those same qualities?

David's Heart

Psalm 119 gives us some remarkable insights into the mind of David, which enable us to understand the priorities and perspectives that gave him favor with God. Perhaps David's most outstanding quality was that he *loved* God's law and spent time studying it. He writes: "I will *delight* myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word" (119:16), and: "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (119:97). Many argue that the law has been done away and that we are no longer under the law, but under grace! Many today seldom take time to really study the word of God, or if they do study, they do so to find some way around what it plainly says. David had a totally different orientation. You might ask yourself, what is your attitude toward the law of God? Is it like David's?

David also *valued* God's law because he understood how important it was in his personal life and in his role

David was *teachable*. He writes, "teach me Your statutes... open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your law... make me understand the way of your precepts... give me understanding, and I shall keep your law (119:12, 18, 27, 34). What a wonderful attitude, and what a contrast to the current notion that "we don't need a church or a ministry to teach us; we can do it ourselves."

as a leader. He realized that living according to the laws of God would lead to blessings (119:1–2), keep him from sinning and making mistakes (119:11, 110), make him wiser than his enemies (119:98), provide a guide for his life and for making decisions (119:106) and bring real peace of mind (119:165). David realized that the word of God contained *revealed truth* and was true in its *entirety* (119:142, 151, 160). How different this attitude is from those who assert that the commandments are out of date and no longer applicable to us today, and that biblical ideas and instructions are irrelevant concerning how we live our lives. How do you view the laws of God?

David was *teachable*. He writes, "teach me Your statutes... open my eyes that I may see wondrous things from Your law... make me understand the way of your precepts... give me understanding, and I shall keep your law (119:12, 18, 27, 34). What a wonderful attitude, and what a contrast to the current notion that "we don't need a church or a ministry to teach us; we can do it ourselves." David was also *repentant* (Psalm 51). He was willing to admit when he was wrong, without making endless excuses or blaming others for his mistakes or problems. In spite of the challenges that David faced in his life, he was *positive* and *remained focused* on accomplishing God's plan and

purpose even during trials. Notice his prayer, "purge me with hyssop... restore to me the joy of Your salvation... then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You" (Psalm 51:7–13). These attitudes made David a man after God's own heart. Do you have these same attitudes? Could you develop these attitudes?

Jesus' Example

Jesus Christ was obviously a man after God's own heart. Jesus plainly stated: "I and My father are one" (John 10:30; 17:11, 20–24). He had the same perspective and outlook as the Father. They were on the same wavelength. How different this is from comments today that assert: "I know what the Bible says (or the Church teaches), but here is what I think." Jesus did not promote His own theories and ideas. He said: "I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him... I do nothing of Myself; but as

My Father taught Me, I speak these things... I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:26–29). This kind of attitude is the foundation for real unity and harmony. It does not foster division in any way. Those who strive to develop this attitude are people after God's own heart.

We can see from a number of situations that Jesus was also *humble* and *obedient*. He had no problem being in a subordinate position. He was subject to His physical parents (Luke 2:51) according to the commandment (Exodus 20:12). He was subject to His heavenly Father and sought to do the will of the Father (Matthew 26:39; John 5:30; 6:38). He was not an individualist who insisted on doing things His own way. He was deeply impressed with a Roman officer's respect for authority (Luke 7:1–10). How different this is from attitudes that are so prevalent in the Church and society today. Jesus would have no problem following the New Testament instructions for women to be subject to their husbands, for children to obey their parents, for servants to respect their masters (Ephesians 5:21–6:9; 1 Peter 2–3), for Church members to respect their leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13) or that elders need to be examples to their flocks (1 Peter 5:1–5)—because He *knew* what it was like to be in these situations!

But Jesus possessed additional qualities that made Him a man after God's own heart. Jesus had *compassion*

(Matthew 9:36; Mark 8:2), which is also an attribute of the Father (Psalm 86:15). He healed people because he *cared about others*. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because He knew the trials the future held for His countrymen (see Matthew 23:37; Luke 19:41–44). Jesus was also *mission oriented*. He knew and understood the plan of God and His role in that plan. From His youth He knew He must be about His Father's business (Luke 2:49). Throughout His ministry, He remained focused and maintained His sense of urgency (John 4:34; 9:4). Jesus also *persevered*. He did not quit when things got difficult! Facing the reality of His coming crucifixion, He determined to keep going (Matthew 26:39), and at the close of His earthly ministry He was able to say to His Father: "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). Jesus fulfilled His commitments, He stayed the course and He finished the race, because He was a man after God's own heart. Our goal must be to do the same.

People after God's Heart

But the story does not stop with David and Jesus. The Old Testament describes a number of individuals who possessed many of the same qualities that made them persons after God's own heart. Abraham is called "the friend of God" because he *believed* and obeyed God (2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23). God blessed Abraham because of his *obedience* and his efforts to lead his household "in the way of the LORD" (Genesis 18:17–19). Moses was a powerful instrument in God's hands because, even though he was reared as the son of the Pharaoh of Egypt, "Moses was very *humble* [teachable], more than all men who were on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). Hannah, the mother of Samuel, is portrayed as a righteous woman, who poured out her soul to God and *believed* God would answer her request (1 Samuel 1). When her request for a son was granted, she *unselfishly* gave that son back to God and praised God with a prayer that sounds like a Psalm of David (1 Samuel 2). Daniel and his companions Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego are noted for their obedience to God and their determination not to compromise His laws even under the threat of death (see Daniel 1, 3, 6).

The New Testament also has its list of individuals who were persons after God's own heart. Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). They must have been very dedicated and competent parents because Jesus said of their son, "among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was

told by an angel: "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women... for you have found favor with God" (Luke 1:28–30). We begin to understand why Mary found favor with God when we read her prayer (Luke 1:47–55). Mary knew Scripture, and her prayer cites 12 different Old Testament passages. Mary was not a superficial person, but thought deeply about what she heard and saw, and was willing to wait to see the will of God (Luke 2:19, 51). Another Mary, the sister of Martha, was commended by Jesus for not letting routine physical duties distract her from more important spiritual concerns. Because Mary was focused on what was important to God, Jesus said: "Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38–42).

Peter, James, John, Paul and the other Apostles and disciples also appear to be persons after God's own heart because they were chosen and used to build the New Testament Church. Jesus prayed to God for His chosen disciples, "that they may be one as We are one" (John 17:11). Jesus' prayer also included those who are being called today: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who *will believe* in me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me" (John 17:20–21). It is *God's desire* that we become persons after His own heart (see Deuteronomy 10:12–13; Isaiah 66:2).

Seven Basic Qualities

But what do we *do* to become people after God's own heart? In summary, as we have seen, we need to:

1. Develop a love for God's law. Spend time studying and learning to apply the laws of God (2 Timothy 2:15). David delighted in learning from the word of God, because he knew how relevant it was to living a successful and meaningful life. We do what we enjoy. Do you enjoy being taught from God's word? Drinking deeply of God's word will help us become people after God's own heart.
2. Pray, fast and meditate regularly. David and Daniel prayed at least three times a day (Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10). Jesus prayed regularly for considerable periods of time over important issues (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12–13). Fasting keeps us humble and reminds us how insignificant we really are and how much we need not only physical nourishment, but also the

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The Threshold of *Tomorrow's World*

By John H. Ogwyn

We, God's people, are going to the Feast of Tabernacles this year with many significant events happening in the world around us. While events in the Middle East have dominated the news, important developments are going on behind the scenes in Europe as well. Most of us realize that these days we are preparing to celebrate will finally be fulfilled in the not-too-distant future. Down through the centuries, thousands of God's servants have anticipated this coming time of hope and glory, but we are *now* living in the generation of people that will actually experience this transition from today's evil world to tomorrow's glorious world.

How is what we are preparing to do, in the days immediately ahead, relevant to this coming new world? As we prepare to leave for the Feast of Tabernacles, do we truly grasp that we are on the threshold of tomorrow's world? If we *really* grasp this important concept, it will shape the entire way in which we go about celebrating this festival season.

Why Go to the Feast?

In Deuteronomy 14:22, Moses instructed the ancient Israelites that they were to truly tithe all of their increase every year. In this context, however, he is discussing a different tithe than the tithe intended for the Levitical priesthood (Numbers 18:21–24). This verse refers to a *second* tithe, one that the Israelites were commanded to “eat before the LORD

your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always” (v. 23). In this verse we encounter the **first** reason that God commanded His people to come to the Feast. That reason is simply that we may learn how to fear—to *deeply reverence*—the Eternal Creator God more deeply and fully.

The **second** reason for going to the Feast is spelled out in verse 26: “And you shall spend that money [your second tithe] for whatever your heart desires... you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household.” The heads of households in ancient Israel were commanded to appear before the Eternal with their families and *to rejoice* there before Him. Learning to deeply reverence and stand in awe of God is viewed as a prelude to rejoicing with the whole family in God's presence.

Underlying the Israelites' attendance at the Feast was the concept that they were going to literally appear before their Creator. They were going to be eating “*before the LORD your God*” (v. 23)—that is, in His very presence! The festivals were times to be with God, and to fellowship with Him in a very special way.

If we have the realization that we are coming into God's very presence in a special way at this time of year, it will set a tone for all of our festival activities. We come before Him to learn His ways more deeply—to

develop an even more deep and profound awe of the great God. We also come so that we may rejoice together as a family in His presence. Understanding these principles ourselves, we should desire to instill them into our children. If we all grasp that we are coming into the presence of God in a very special way at the festivals, this will have a tremendous effect on every part of our celebration and approach.

Even many in the world understand this concept, though they apply it wrongly. You may recall an event widely broadcast on television a few years ago. Pope John Paul II had come to the United States on a special visit, and was to hold an outdoor service in Washington, DC. A few individuals had been pre-selected for presentation to him prior to his address. Among them was a family consisting of a mother and father and many children ranging in ages from early teens down to toddler age. It was interesting to watch the children as they moved onto the stage and went with their parents to meet the Pope. They were all “scrubbed and shiny” as the saying goes, and were attired in their “Sunday best.” Clearly, their parents had impressed upon them the specialness of the occasion, and they were on their best behavior. They were deeply conscious of coming into the presence of one they viewed as holy, one they viewed—however wrongly—as the very Vicar of Christ on earth. Their sense of awe and wonder at the occasion was clearly evident. The object of their awe and wonder was wrong,

but we can find a lesson here. If the world and professing Christianity can often readily place its awe and reverence in things against God, how much more ought true Christians be ready to approach the true God with awe and reverence?

If we truly understand the concept that we come to the Feast *to appear before God* and to feast in His presence, this will instill within each of us a sense of awe. We, in turn, need to convey that sense to our children. This is why it is important for families to sit together at the Feast, and to discuss the sermons and sermonettes at appropriate times during the day. It is vital that parents help their children absorb maximum benefit from the services and come to understand more about God and His ways during the Feast. We are coming to worship the Creator, the Lord of Hosts, together as a family unit.

Understanding the real *why* of going to the Feast will ensure that we strive to be at every service on time. It will mean that we seek to get sufficient rest so that we can be alert and attentive during the services. Additionally, it will mean that our eating and drinking and our fun activities are carried out with the realization that we are rejoicing *in the presence of our God*. If such an understanding is present, then there will never be any excessive drinking or questionable activities—because who would ever do such things in the presence of God?

Celebrating the Feast in this way is preparation for being able to share it with all humanity in a few short years. We are, after all, standing on the threshold of a brand-new world—a world in which we will have the opportunity to directly assist Jesus Christ in serving humanity and preparing individuals for an inheritance in God's family. Have you thought about what it will be like to go through the transition and

see a brand new world, built upon a very different value system, ushered in? The Apostle John explained to his readers that this present world—based upon the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—was destined to pass from the scene. Those who love this system and its values will pass away with it, while those who truly serve their Creator will abide forever (1 John 2:15–17).

The Inauguration of Tomorrow's World

The world in which we live is filled with pain and suffering. The Apostle Paul in Romans 8 compared the world and its current sufferings to a woman in labor pains. He said that the entire creation was “in labor,” yearning for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The fall festivals, all of which come in the seventh month of God's sacred calendar, focus on the fulfillment of the hope that God has given to mankind. They anticipate the time when God's people will actually put on immortality and enter into glory. Most professing Christians do not understand the great purpose that God is working out for all of mankind. Most think that right now is the only day of salvation, and must therefore conclude that the vast majority of all of mankind is lost forever. God is not in some desperate contest with the devil trying to determine whether the world will be saved or lost. Rather, God is in control and has declared the conclusion and outcome of His great plan from the very beginning.

A few years from now, the most awesome series of events in the history of mankind will be ushered in by the blast of angelic trumpets. We celebrate that time of God's coming intervention every year on the Feast of Trumpets.

Revelation 8 and 9 contain most of the information about the first six of these trumpets, with additional information about the seventh trumpet contained in chapters 10 and 11. Revelation 8:1–2 shows that the seven trumpets collectively constitute the seventh seal, the time period called the Day of the Lord or the time of God's wrath. They represent His end-time punishments on rebellious nations who continue to ignore the warnings of God's true servants.

It is the sounding of the seventh trumpet, mentioned in Revelation 11:15, that ushers in the final aspect of God's intervention. This will signal the return of Jesus Christ, God's final judgment and conquest of the nations and the resurrection of the saints to immortality. It will also signal the pouring out of the vials containing the seven last plagues upon rebellious humanity (Revelation 16). These last seven plagues occur after the seventh trumpet has been blown and prior to the binding and removal of Satan described in Revelation 20:1–3.

The next Holy Day celebrated by God's people is the Day of Atonement, which anticipates the time that Satan is put away and no longer allowed to walk the earth, tempting and deceiving human beings. Have you ever wondered why God chose to make this particular festival a fast day? Have you ever noticed that God anciently decreed that the year of the Jubilee began on the Day of Atonement, not nine days earlier on the first day of the month, the Feast of Trumpets? Why?

In Revelation 12, God uses the metaphor of a great dragon to describe Satan. In the Old Testament, the term *Leviathan* is used for the dragon. Job 41 describes this dragon-like Leviathan and concludes in verse 34 by asserting that “he is king over all of the children of pride.” Pride, of course, was Lucifer's original sin. Ezekiel 28:17 informs us that his heart became *lifted up*, while Isaiah

14:13–14 makes plain that he sought to ascend into heaven, exalt his own throne and be like the Most High.

Fasting is described in Scripture as a means by which we humble our souls (Psalm 35:13). In fasting on Atonement, we are demonstrating that we value humility over pride and are rejecting that great dragon who reigns over all of the children of pride. Once Satan—the enslaver of mankind through sin—is put away, then liberty can be proclaimed throughout the land. This is what the law of the Jubilee, as given in Leviticus 25, foreshadowed—it was the time when the dispossessed could return to their inheritance and when slaves were released. It anticipated the days of the Messiah, who would proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord by offering deliverance and liberty. These events are linked together in the prophecies of Isaiah 27. We learn in verse 1 that God will punish Leviathan the twisted serpent. Verse 13 describes the subsequent blast of the Jubilee trumpet announcing freedom to the Israelite captives and their return to their inheritance in the Holy Land. This sets the stage for the entire Millennium, symbolized by the Feast of Tabernacles.

This future time when the Eternal will make “a feast of fat things” to all of the nations (cf. Isaiah 25) is characterized by the festive nature of the Feast of Tabernacles. There will be a 1,000-year time of peace and prosperity, when all of mankind learns and follows the ways of God. The curses that were the result of sin will be removed. All will finally have rest from sorrow, from fear and from hard bondage (Isaiah 14:3). The whole earth will be at rest, and will “break forth into singing” (v. 7). Fear, sorrow and hard bondage were all first mentioned in Genesis 3, and represented the aftermath of man’s sin. Once Satan is removed, and the government of the Messiah

reigns over all of the earth, there will be true rest and peace.

The Feast of Tabernacles was intended to be both a time of festivity and of spiritual renewal. The Israelites dwelt in temporary dwellings and decorated them in a festive manner with available vegetation (Leviticus 23:40–42). They ate and drank and celebrated in the presence of God, giving thanks to Him for His bounty. They were to assemble every day to hear God’s word read and expounded (cf. Nehemiah 8:18). As we do this in our modern setting, we focus our attention on the coming world of which we desire so deeply to be a part. We should come away from the Feast with our appetites whetted, and our minds more educated, about the wonderful world that is to come. We should be more understanding about the whole way of life we are going to help others learn in just a few short years.

When the Feast is understood in this context, it is far more than a vacation. It is a time for giving and sharing with others (cf. Nehemiah 8:10), as well as a time for celebrating and learning. There is a new world coming, based upon values far different from those of the world in which we now live. As God’s people, we are to be preparing for that new world, and anticipating it eagerly.

Coming at the conclusion of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles is the Holy Day that is least understood by both Jews and professing Christians alike. In the Old Testament it is called simply the “eighth day” or the day of solemn assembly. We commonly use the term Last Great Day, based upon the description given in John 7:37.

What will happen to the billions of people who have lived and died without ever having really *known* the truth of God? Are they doomed to eternal damnation, even though they never even had a chance for salvation? The answer to this often-

pondered but much-misunderstood question is revealed in the meaning of this final Holy Day of God’s great plan.

It is in the aftermath of 1,000 years of Christ’s government on this earth that “the rest of the dead”—those individuals both obscure and famous who have lived throughout mankind’s history—will be once more restored to life. The books of the Bible, the criteria by which all must be judged, will be opened to their understanding and the Book of Life will be opened so that they will have a chance to now have their names inscribed there. Only after every human being has had a chance to accept or reject God’s salvation will the final judgment of God take place to destroy the unrepentant wicked. It is in the aftermath of that time that the New Heavens and the New Earth will come into being, representing the “end of the beginning” and the very threshold of eternity!

With a deeper realization of the meaning of these festivals, our celebration of them should be enhanced. When we think about why God wants us to come before Him—so we can learn to fear Him more fully and to rejoice in His presence—this should determine our approach in celebrating these festivals. We are preparing to participate in a government that will finally solve the problems of this hurting and strife-torn world. Festival time is preparation time for tomorrow’s world, and for whatever time stretches out between now and then. We are in preparation to be those who will be entrusted with the government of the coming age. Do we truly grasp that reality?

As we stand on the threshold of tomorrow’s world observing God’s fall festivals, we are celebrating the soon-coming time that represents the fulfillment of mankind’s age-old dreams and hopes. We are truly approaching the days of hope and glory! ☐

Who Will Attack America?

By Rod Reynolds

Some today, departing from what they were taught by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, now assert that prior to Jesus Christ's coming it will *not* be a united Europe—including Germany—which leads an attack on modern Israel (including the United States). They suggest instead that the attack will come from an alliance between Russia and such countries as Iran, Libya, Pakistan and India. Their basis for this assertion is a misunderstanding of Ezekiel 38–39, and the observation that some of these countries have in the modern era been hostile to the Jewish state of Israel, as well as to the United States and Britain. In at least one version of this teaching, scriptural warnings about the Great Tribulation are derisively dismissed. God will supposedly step in and destroy the invaders, sparing the peoples of Israel from any serious harm.

The ideas outlined above are not really new, but have been advanced many times in the past. To expose the fallacies of such thinking, Mr. Herbert Armstrong in 1956 wrote an article titled “Will Russia Attack America?” Other publications addressing this topic have been issued over the years. Here we will examine primarily what Scripture has to say about the role of “Assyria”—modern Germany—in this regard.

Needless to say, if we are living near the end of this age and the ushering in of the Kingdom of God, as signs indicate, it is very important that we have a clear understanding of Bible prophecy as it pertains to events that may directly affect us. Being misled, or misleading others about this topic, could have dire consequences!

In examining Ezekiel 38–39, it immediately becomes apparent that the prophecy concerns events affecting Israel soon *after* receiving punishment by the sword for their sins—*after* being gathered out of a national captivity and resettled in their own land (Ezekiel 38:8, 12; 39:21–28). Jesus Christ will return to reign in Jerusalem (Isaiah 24:23; Zechariah 8:3; 14:9; Matthew 25:31–32). At *that time*—subsequent to His second coming—He will gather the outcasts of Israel from their captivity (Ezekiel 20:33–35, 40–42; Zephaniah 3:14–20; Zechariah 8:3, 7–8). Therefore, the time setting for the prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39 is *after*, not *before*, the return of Jesus Christ.

Scripture tells us where the outcast captives of Israel will be gathered from: “...they shall come back from the land of the enemy” (Jeremiah 31:16). Israel will have been scattered to many nations, but most prominent

among them, as indicated in Scripture, will be “Assyria.” “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD will set his hand again the *second* time to recover the remnant of his people, that shall remain, from Assyria” (Isaiah 11:11). Other scriptures that place latter-day Israel in an Assyrian captivity include Isaiah 11:16; 27:13; Hosea 9:4; 11:5, 11 and Zechariah 10:10.

Assyrian ethnic and cultural links with central Europe stretch far back into ancient history. There is clear evidence that when the Assyrians left their homelands in northern Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, they eventually settled primarily in the areas now called Germany and Austria. This article will not review this point in detail, but an outline of some of the evidence was published in the *Plain Truth* in 1962, in a series of articles titled “Germany in Prophecy!” Clearly, where “Assyria” is mentioned in the prophecies of the end times, it should be identified as Germany.

Zechariah wrote his prophecy more than 200 years after the former captivity of Israel, and almost 100 years after Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, had been laid waste and the ancient Assyrian Empire had disappeared into the dustbin of history in 612BC. Yet Zechariah prophesied a *future* time when “the pride of Assyria shall be brought down” (Zechariah 10:11). In the same context, Zechariah writes of a latter-day captivity involving the houses of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) and Judah (Zechariah 10:6, 10). Zechariah says that Ephraim will be brought out of that captivity into Gilead and Lebanon (verse 10). Many other prophecies speak of this same end-time repatriation for Israel and Judah from national captivity. It will be such a momentous occurrence “that it shall no more be said, ‘The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers” (Jeremiah 16:14–15).

The nations that will dominate the final 10-nation beast power resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire will be primarily Gentile nations, though some with Israelitish contingents, such as France and possibly others, will most likely be included. The nations most directly affected by the Great Tribulation, “Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7; cf. Matthew 24:21), and the ensuing captivity will include the Jews, and those nations descended from Joseph upon whom the name of Jacob

primarily devolved (Genesis 48:16; Amos 6:6–8). But we must not forget that, besides fighting the United States and Great Britain, German armies invaded and occupied several of the Israelitish nations of northwest Europe during World War II (Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway).

Prophecy clearly shows that Assyria will be prominent among those nations that attack and take captive the modern-day descendants of Israel. “Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets” (Isaiah 10:5–6; see also verse 24; 14:24–25; 30:31; Hosea 11:5–6). There is often duality—or type and antitype—in prophecy, and while these prophecies applied to the former captivity, they also apply to the latter-day captivity, as is evidenced by the fact that they are placed in juxtaposition with scriptures concerning the final deliverance and salvation of Israel, as in Isaiah 10:20–24; 14:1–3; 30:18–26; Hosea 11:8–11.

There are numerous other prophecies—especially when the duality principle, which obviously applies in this instance, is taken into account—linking “Assyria” and “Babylon” with the end-time destruction of Israel and Judah, just as they both played major roles in their destruction in ancient times. For examples, see Isaiah 14:1–4; Micah 4:10; Nahum 3:1–4 (compare Revelation 17:1–6). Moreover, the “beast” power that will arise at the end time will dominate the earth through military might (Daniel 7:23; Revelation 13:7). Who would stand in the way of a European power arising with designs on dominating the earth militarily? That same power will “destroy the mighty, and also the holy people” (Daniel 8:24). And the Beast power shall “enter the Glorious Land” (Palestine), concurrent with the Great Tribulation (Daniel 11:40–12:1). That “Beast” power is associated prophetically with “Babylon the Great,” and the final resurrection of the “Holy Roman Empire” (Revelation 17), in which Germany has traditionally played a key role.

Some consider it ridiculous to think that Germany could or would at some future time attack the United States. They view Germany as a docile country, weakened militarily and friendly to the United States and Britain. Do not forget, however, that the United States and Britain fought two wars with Germany in the past century. And tensions similar to those that led to previous wars could surface again. Moreover, prophecy indicates it will not be Germany alone, but a number of nations, led by a resurgent United Europe including “Assyria,” or Germany, that will defeat and lead into captivity the modern nations identified as “Israel.”

Who in 1933 would have thought a “disarmed” Germany would possess the world’s most powerful army and launch World War II by 1939? God says of Assyria: “Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations” (Isaiah 10:7). Already the combined military forces of just three of the likely members of the ten-nation Beast power—France, Germany and Italy—number more than a million troops, and they have not yet even begun to really gear up for war! The French have land-based and sea-based nuclear missiles that would come under the control of a supranational government in the event of a European political union. A politically and economically integrated Europe would be a highly industrialized, technologically advanced power, capable of competing with any power on the world stage. Remember, the final king has yet to arise: “And when he comes, he must continue a short time” (Revelation 17:10). This indicates when he does appear on the scene, the final pieces will fall into place in rapid order. For now, however, the “beast that was... is not” (Revelation 17:11).

Even now, however, ominous trends are already at play. A British author, Adrian Hilton, alarmed at the implications of the European drive for unity, has written: “The politics of the next few years will determine whether Europe is about to enter a period of progress or of chaos” (*The Principality and Power of Europe*, p. 142). Some of the leaders of the movement towards European unity openly dream of a restored “Holy Roman Empire.” Otto von Hapsburg, the influential German political leader and descendant of the Hapsburg dynasty, is said to favor a European head of state elected for life—“crowned,” in effect—as Holy Roman Emperor.

Hapsburg wrote: “Now we do possess a European symbol which belongs to all nations equally. This is the Crown of the Holy Roman Empire, which embodies the tradition of Charlemagne, the ruler of a united Occident.... It should... be considered whether the European head of state... should not also become the guardian of a symbol which, more than any other, represents the sovereignty of the European community” (in *The Social Order of Tomorrow*, cited by Hilton, *op. cit.*, p. 144).

Some have seen in the movement toward European unity, the same dark and dangerous forces and tendencies which have produced some of the bloodiest wars in history. Adrian Hilton and others have expressed concern about a dictatorial oligarchy gaining dominance in Europe and imposing its will on others through force. Influential leaders, including former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl,

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International Corner...

Canadian Report

—By Charles Bryce

The year 2001 is turning out to be a banner year for God's Work in Canada. The churches are stable and the Work is experiencing solid growth on all fronts. In fact, some of the growth is dramatic, such as a 61 percent increase in the *Tomorrow's World* mailing list and a 27 percent increase in responses to the telecast on Vision TV.

The *Tomorrow's World* telecast has become so powerful and the *Tomorrow's World* magazine is being produced with such high quality that we are seeing a groundswell of interest from people, from all walks of life, who come in contact with them. A permanent audience is being established with highly promising potential for future growth. The ripple effect being generated is producing an increasing number of co-workers, visit requests and baptisms.

The following information from reports sent in by our dedicated Elder in the province of Alberta, Mr. Stuart Wachowicz, clearly illustrates this positive upward spiral. He writes:

"I was looking at some numbers last night and was amazed to see that in July 1999, we had 21 in total in Alberta. Since that time we have had 41 visit requests or calls. Now we have attending, or those who could attend if a church were close enough, 65. In all, I am currently counseling 10 people for baptism."

Mr. Wachowicz went on to discuss plans he and his wife,

Marguerite, have made to pay another visit to a very interested couple who live in Kugluktuk, a town on the Arctic Ocean. This location is 1,500 miles north of Edmonton, and will start to get very chilly before much longer. These people are ready for baptism and the only place to baptize them is in the ocean. Therefore, this must be done soon before the cold waters of the Arctic turn to solid ice. Apparently there are others living there who are becoming interested in the truth as well. This means we may need to establish a video group, in the not-too-distant future, way up north on the Arctic Circle! We are starting to wonder if we should begin searching for a team of dogs, a dogsled and some mukluks for the Wachowiczs, so they can mush around in comfort on their visits up there in the winter, when the going really gets tough.

Even though the beautiful province of Alberta is the "hot spot" for activity in the Canadian work at the present time, there are several other areas where good growth and dynamic developments are taking place as well. Thankfully, peace and unity have settled in on the Living Church of God all across the country from St. John's, Newfoundland to Victoria, BC. This has happened because of God's mercy and blessings, a hard-working ministry trying to follow Dr. Meredith's admonition to practice servant leadership and zealous, grounded brethren, who are pressing forward in fulfilling their calling. We are all on guard against becoming careless and letting down, just as everything is coalescing and coming into position to really take off! It surely does appear the Work is now poised for a breakthrough. As we carefully monitor indicators of the condition of

the Canadian Work, all trends in the data that flows into the Toronto office continue to point to growth and more growth for the rest of the year. This leads us to believe, even with the record-breaking year we have had so far—the best is yet to come.

European Report

—By Douglas Winnail

We are striving to draw the various parts of the Living Church of God in Europe together in a more focused effort to serve the brethren and do the work of preaching the gospel in this historic and significant part of the world. In July, we held our first combined Sabbath service for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. We met in Drogheda, a town on the east coast of Ireland about halfway between Dublin and Belfast, with nearly 30 in attendance. From Ireland, elders Brian Bedlow and Henry Cooper alternate in making monthly trips with their wives to London, to assist Robert Storrier (an elder living in Glasgow) in serving brethren in the United Kingdom.

At the end of July, I made a trip to the Netherlands to meet with brethren on the Sabbath. I plan to make regular visits to the Netherlands, since English is a second language for many Dutch people. Mr. and Mrs. Franz Peeters, our hosts in the Netherlands, have been very helpful in having LCG registered in that country. They are currently busy translating literature into the Dutch language. We are also making efforts to develop more advertising in both Europe and the UK, in addition to the current efforts in Ireland. Most of the responses to Irish

magazine ads are from people new to the Truth. An Irish bank account should be operational soon.

In August, I traveled to Paris to meet with elder Ray Clore and his wife Rhonda. The Clores serve the Paris congregation, and also video groups in Belgium and Switzerland. I traveled with the Clores to Geneva for a Sabbath service with Swiss and French brethren. Many in the region are still grappling with the effects of doctrinal changes and church divisions they have experienced in recent years. We also had a number of visitors. While in Geneva, we were able to tour and take photos at the Palace of Nations. This impressive stone structure on the shore of Lake Geneva was originally built to house the League of Nations, but is now used by the United Nations. It contains more than 2,000 offices and is one of the busiest conference centers in the world, with more than 8,000 meetings held there each year.

On Sunday, we drove across the Alps to Turin, Italy, traversing strategic mountain passes used by Julius Caesar and German emperors in their pursuit of military conquests. The French and Italians fought for centuries for control of these vital avenues of commerce. From Turin, we were able to explore and photograph many historical sites in nearby alpine valleys, where the Waldensians fled for refuge during centuries of persecution by the Roman Catholic Church. We visited the Waldensian headquarters in the mountain-ringed village of Torre Pellice, and toured one of their old churches, the building where they hold their annual synod and a museum with exhibits of their centuries-long struggle to practice their biblically based faith. We then drove deeper into the Angrogna Valley to view a cave where as many as 200 Waldensians worshiped during times of persecution. Our final stop was the tiny settlement of Pra del Torno, located high on a mountainside, where

Waldensian ministers once studied in the “college of the Barba” (Waldensian ministers were called *barba*).

The scenery in the Waldensian valleys was spectacular—rugged, rocky, tree-covered slopes, sounds of tumbling waterfalls and mountain-tops that disappeared into the clouds. However, it was sobering to realize the bloody persecutions waged against a people who were essentially peace-loving and dedicated to following biblical teachings. Many Waldensians were massacred, imprisoned, banished or burned at the stake for teaching and believing ideas that were contrary to the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. The Waldensians of today regard themselves as part of the global Protestant community, but with a unique history that dates back to the 1200s and possibly to the days of the Apostles.

Spanish Report

—By Mario Hernandez

It was a hot Fourth of July in Paris when my 9-year-old son Ariel and I arrived at the Charles De Gaulle Airport. Coming out of the underground train one hour later, right in the heart of Paris, in front of Notre Dame by the Seine river, made quite an impression on both of us. The Paris I remembered from many years ago was covered with soot, and it was a little bit gloomy. Now, not only the majestic structure of Notre Dame but also the rest of the buildings, looked clean and shiny—and the people were friendlier.

To look at the capital of France with eyes enlightened by the Word of God, is to find an explanation—which no historian of this world can ever offer—for the “excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power” that was predicted for this nation and which certainly came from God as a fulfillment of his promises to Abraham (Genesis 49:3). This is strikingly apparent in

places like the Louvre and Versailles, and from the overall panorama of the city as seen from the Eiffel Tower.

On the Sabbath of July 7, services were held at the Ibis Hotel, 85 kilometers north of Paris, with about 21 in attendance. There were two American families, and brethren who came from Paris, northern France and Belgium. Since there was no translator that day, with God’s help, I was able to give the sermon alternating between French and English.

Considering the fact that our brethren in Europe are so close to the “lion’s mouth,” I felt an appropriate theme for the occasion was: “Where there is no vision the people perish” and also: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.” In this connection, we studied some prophecies that have been fulfilled right in front of our eyes, and we reflected on the unique privilege of having been offered protection from the Great Tribulation.

On Sunday, July 8, after visiting the Louvre, my son and I took a train to Strasbourg, in Alsace, on the border with Germany, where as a youth I had the privilege of going to school for four years. The main purpose of my trip to Strasbourg was to look for some Alsatian friends with whom I had not had contact for 31 years. I was able to find three of my dearest friends. The encounter was charged with emotion and joy. After spending a day with each one of them, we concluded that true friendship is a piece of eternity given to us, because it is affected neither by time nor space. They all said: “Mario, it seems it was yesterday that we were together the last time.” (I met these friends before I was called by God, and I could see that He had not yet opened their minds to His word).

From Strasbourg, we took a plane to Madrid, Spain, in order to visit our few scattered brethren there. Mario

Ferrer, our host, was at the airport. We drove directly to the city of Trujillo, three hours southwest of Madrid, to see Gerardo Espada who lives close to Trujillo in a little town called Madroñera, home of Francisco Pizarro, the famous conqueror of Peru.

I had not seen Mr. Espada for 20 years. He is one of the very few in Spain who have kept the faith that was once delivered. He has made good use of his solitude; like Moses and John the Baptist in the desert he has stayed close to God. I found that solitude is a test for the scattered brethren, but it can be used in a positive way as a powerful tool to stay close to God. I am convinced that God keeps his promise: “I will never forsake you” for those who are alone, not by choice like many today who, for other reasons, choose not to assemble, against whom God gives a serious warning in Hebrews 10:25.

We next flew to the Canary Islands to spend the Sabbath and the proclaimed Church-wide fast with three brethren who live in that area. During Sabbath services, I had the joy of ordaining Mario Ferrer as a deacon. He has been fulfilling this role for a long time. By his dedication and servant leadership skills, he has earned the respect of the brethren.

From the Canary Islands, we returned home through Paris.

Philippines Report

—By Rod McNair

God’s Word says that in the last days there will be “famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places” (Matthew 24:7). On Wednesday, July 4, one of the strongest typhoons in recent years blasted across the northern Philippines island of Luzon. Typhoon Feria (known internationally as “Utor”) brought winds with gusts up

to 170 kilometers per hour (106 mph), knocked down power and telephone lines and wiped out homes and farms all across Luzon. The widespread flooding displaced more than 175,000 people, and caused at least 100 deaths and 284 injuries, with 58 people still missing as of July 8. The government reported 642 million Philippine pesos in damage to agriculture—more than US\$12 million at current exchange rates. Some experts say that the country lost approximately 180,000 tons of corn because of typhoon Feria—equal to almost a quarter of the nation’s annual demand shortfall. “Because of the extent of destruction, we anticipate a greater shortage of [corn] for the rest of the year,” said Ric Pinca, vice president of the Philippine Association of Feedmillers, Inc.

Although no brethren were harmed by this latest storm, it surely will affect the price of food commodities in a country already wracked by economic malaise. Baguio City, approximately a seven-hour drive north of Manila, was one of the hardest hit localities. Located in a mountainous area prone to mudslides, Baguio is home to several Living Church of God members, and is a traditional location for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Mayon Volcano, in the southern Luzon province of Albay, erupted on July 26, sending an ash cloud up to 10 kilometers into the air, and causing thousands of residents within the six kilometer danger zone to flee to evacuation shelters. Many had just returned to their homes after leaving during a previous eruption on June 24. As up to 20,000 residents were evacuated, reports stated that the ash columns from the July 26 eruption stayed long in the sky before wind sent them falling to nearby towns of Daraga, Legazpi City, and Santo Domingo. It was the first time that Daraga and Legazpi experienced ash

falls. The mayor of Legazpi City noted that this eruption marked the first time since 1968 that pyroclastic fragments the size of pebbles reached his town. Although some of our brethren originally come from this part of Luzon, we have none living there at this time. Thankfully, no members were adversely affected by the eruptions.

New Zealand Report

—By Kinnear Penman

Lotty Nelson, a Living Church of God member from Vanuatu, received mention in a special issue of *Time* magazine dealing with Pacific nations. Mrs. Nelson is shown in a photograph teaching children that domestic violence, which is ingrained in their culture, is wrong. From the August 20 *Time* article:

“It’s my husband’s right to hit me when I don’t do something he asks,’ says a mother of six. Changing that attitude is the aim of the Vanuatu Women’s Centre.... While it’s estimated that 1 in 4 Vanuatu women are beaten by their partners, most don’t talk about it... the male attitude, that it’s a private matter, has infiltrated the police and the legal system... the softly spoken Nelson runs a mobile clinic [meaning that she walks] for domestic violence on Tanna Island, one of 15 such clinics in remote parts of Vanuatu. ‘Some women want to kill themselves,’ she says, ‘but I tell them it’s not their fault. And I tell their husbands that what they are doing is wrong.’ Some men, at least, appear to be listening...”

LYC—A Legacy for *Their* Children

By Gerald Weston

“**B**y your actions you are building a tradition, a legacy, for *your* children. In the last two weeks you have been shown a different way of life from what you see at school. We have tried to show you that when everything is done decently, in order, and without confusion—when everyone practices the way of outgoing concern, when no one is left out, when self-centered ‘out-cooling’ one another is de-emphasized—the result is peace, safety and blessings for all. Between now and LYC 2002, you will be deciding each day by many small choices whether this is the legacy you will pass on to your future children, or whether you will pass on to them the culture of this world. ‘I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you *and your descendants* may live’” (Deuteronomy 30:19). With these words, LYC Camp Director Gerald Weston exhorted Living Church of God teens at Northwoods Christian Camp in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Campers enjoyed a range of activities. For the Communications class, campers were divided into four groups. One group was sent out to take video and still pictures of activities. The still photographs would later be used for *Living Reflections 2001*, as well as for postings on a Web page. Video footage was used for a video shown at the end of camp, and also for documenting activities. A second group was sent out to do interviews and to write the articles that will appear in *Living Reflections 2001*. Ben McCarty helped a third group view hundreds of photographs and select just the right ones to be placed on the Web site. The last group viewed activities and wrote scripts so that they could give audio accounts of camp over the Web site. Even the staff was surprised by the creativity of some of the campers. Two that were sent out to check out the “Challenge Course” decided to do an unusual interview with the bucket that was a part of the course. If you would like to hear what the bucket had to say, check it out at: <http://www.youth-web.org>.

The Challenge Course was just that. For some of the girls the “Trust Fall” was a real challenge. This is an exercise in which a camper stands blindfolded on a platform and falls backward into the arms of dorm mates and helping staff members. It is perfectly safe for the person falling, but as a couple of staff members found, it can be painful if the falling camper panics on the way down. Several girls said that they could not do it, but with encouragement from their friends, they mustered the courage and experienced the thrill and excitement of overcoming their fears.

Most of the challenges were of a team nature. Blindfolded campers had to work together in groups of three to draw out water from one bucket and fill another by following directions from a leader who could see, but who could only participate by giving verbal commands. There was also the Challenge Course in which members of a dorm had to traverse an imaginary chasm with only three boards and strategically spaced stalagmites. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ames watched Dorm 1-B start out rather poorly by immediately losing one board, but they soon saw them settle down,



use their heads, and make a strong recovery. Four of their party of 12 figuratively “died” in the crossing, and most of those were at the beginning. A fifth member became a casualty when he carelessly fell back into the chasm. After each of these challenges, everyone sat down and discussed what was learned and how they could have done better.

There were also personal challenges offered on the chin-up bar. Greg Wise was the chin-up champion camper with 17. Special treats were given for campers who could beat staff members. Mr. Shumway surprised Greg and his dorm by tying him, thus remaining undefeated! Janelle Woolridge was tops for the girls with six chin-ups. Janelle was one of three who had come all the way from New Zealand. Joshua and Deborah Penman were the other two Kiwis.

Dance class is always a favorite with the campers. This year they were taught the swing, waltz, fox trot, crocodile rock and salsa. Each boys’ dorm had the plea-

sure of escorting a girls' dorm to an activity called Topics and Dance, an activity in which they came together in a slightly more formal atmosphere to enjoy a special dessert and a table topics session, where all have the opportunity to comment on topics of interest to teens, followed by a chance to put into practice the dances they have been learning. Campers continued a tradition begun a couple of years ago, in which the boys purchase a flower for each of the girls for this special evening.

It had been several years since LYC had a riflery course, but Mr. Wendell Vice, an NRA-certified instructor, set up a target range and conducted a riflery class. In two weeks, the campers shot off about 20,000 rounds of .22 shells.



Living Youth Camp presents a clear and positive alternative to a world out of control. While our teens like the results of it,

they find this alternative foreign to the culture in which they live and move. Some quickly see the benefits of God's way, while others learn to accept it more slowly, or outright resist it. This always makes for a challenge for the staff, and for the majority of campers who are "sold" on the program and love God's way of outgoing concern. This year was a greater challenge because of the large number of new staff and campers. Forty-three percent of our campers were attending their first Living Youth Camp, and about three of every ten adult staff members were new to the program. All but two of our 25 high school staff had attended before, but for them it was a matter of transition from camper to staff. All of this left us with a real challenge to uphold and maintain our standards and traditions.

At the heart and core of our program we want all things to be done decently, in order, without confusion and in peace. Or to put it another way: if you maintain the first three principles, the fourth—peace—will follow. Decency is the antonym of indecency, and indecency is the entertainment of this vile age. Foul language, crass and crude talk, bathroom humor and the double entendre are a way of life for most of society today. Movies, videos, books, songs and magazines all promote indecent ways of

expression, and our youth are tuned in and turned on. Regrettably, many teens have become experts at appearing one way in the presence of Church adults and another way when they are among themselves. Many parents would be shocked to know what their kids are like when their parents are not around. This is the challenge we face. How can we encourage our youth to internalize our way of life?

Living Youth Camp must be more than a bribe to keep our teens in the Church. We cannot give them enough gifts to make them love us. In fact, this approach (we give and they take) almost always backfires. For sure, camp must be a lot of fun. This is why we provide enjoyable recreational experiences, such as volleyball, flag football, canoeing, riflery and dance. But, there must also be instruction in righteousness and practice in righteous living. In dance class, Mr. Michael Thomas reminded the campers that the most important thing to remember is to "think of the well-being of the other person." In Camp Council, where we eat lunch with representatives from each dorm, we constantly remind them that "no one is to be left out." This applies to the dances and to fellowship time. We encourage them to live by the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Another guiding principle is to have the campers invest in their camp experience. The financial section of the application for camp asks campers how much they plan to pay for their camp experience. Campers who work to pay their own tuition will often take camp more seriously. Campers who *expect* others to pay their way are more in tune with the *get* way of life than the *give* way. While some teens have more opportunities to earn money than others, because of age and location, it is not unreasonable to expect all campers—even the younger ones—to provide a portion of their tuition. This shows us who really wants to come.

Another way we expect campers to invest in the program is through the Campus Improvement class. This year campers assisted Steve Olson, our Campus Improvement department head, in adding 16-foot additions onto two boys' dorms. They helped with the foundation, the roof, and everything in between. In addition to these two dorms, in the previous three years campers have increased the size of a third dorm, replaced the deck on the lodge, and removed many piles of brush. This has helped make Northwoods Christian Camp "our" camp, and has made it possible to increase by 12 the number of boys we can accept. It

LYC 2001 LYC 2001 LYC 2001 LYC 2001



also provides greater living space even with the increased numbers.

Another small, but important, project for Mr. Olson, ably assisted by Patrick Scarborough, was to figure out why the hot water was not reaching the showers in the boys' bath house. After the problem was discovered, it was quickly remedied—and for the first time in four years the boys enjoyed hot showers! This was a major morale booster!

There was a change in site management at Northwoods Christian Camp this spring, and we were frankly a bit nervous, since we had such a fine working relationship with the previous manager. After becoming acquainted, we were reassured. We were able to sit down with Northwoods representatives Denny Holloway and Nelson Gage, and share our vision of what Northwoods can become. We also gave them our five-year wish list. We have no direct say in what improvements can be made, but we have found the Board of Directors of the camp very receptive to our needs, and we try to do projects that will benefit them. In the next five years, we believe we will be able to add on to two more boys' dorms, build a storage building for all of our equipment and improve the living conditions within existing dorms. We would also like to construct another girls' dorm, but that is less certain. Much of the funding for these projects comes from donations of materials by local businesses, as well as Church members. We provide the labor for these projects and, where there are direct expenses, we sometimes split those costs with Northwoods. For example, this year we spent about \$1,000 from our budget to complete the two dormitory additions. To put this in perspective, this is less than half of what we spend on our Communications class.

On the new site manager's wish list is a pavilion; something that we will encourage. This would serve as additional space for our activities, especially dances. Currently we use the lodge for our final dance, and space is a problem when we have all the campers together at one time.

LYC has been described as the closest experience we have to Ambassador College. While it is a far cry from that, especially in terms of the time involved, we do try to pass along the same values. We see ourselves as working to "Recapture True Values" in a valueless world. We recognize "The Word of God Is the Foundation of Knowledge." This is why the Bible is seen in our camp and instruction in it is given daily. Every day a camper will have either a Christian Living class or a Teen Life class. Christian Living covers more doctrinal subject matter. Teen Life tackles the social struggles of a teen's life.

Dr. Jeff Fall taught Christian Living this year. His wife, Barbara, and several of the ministers taught the Teen Life classes.

Once again this year we are producing a book of memories called *Living Reflections 2001*. In it, the campers have recorded in pictures and articles what they were doing during the two weeks they spent in the north woods of Michigan this summer. We expect it to be mailed around Feast time.

We believe LYC is a wonderful program that can give our youth a break from the world's pressures for two weeks and offer them a look at a very different way of life,

but we also recognize it is of limited value. Parents have and should recognize that they have the greatest impact on their children. While the Church can offer support, only parents can give children the full attention and daily training children and teens need. Then, in the end, our teens must choose which way of life they want to pass on to their children. The decisions they make today are determining what kind of culture their children will find in the Church and at LYC in the future. They are building a legacy for their own future children, and they will reap the rewards if they build wisely, or pay the price for their own folly. ☐

Who Will Attack America?

(continued from page 11)

have also expressed the view that if the present efforts toward unity fall short, war will inevitably result. A document of Germany's Christian Democratic Union political party states ominously: "If European integration were not to progress, Germany might be called upon, or tempted by its own security constraints, to try to effect the stabilization... on its own, and in the traditional way" (cited by Hilton, *op. cit.*, p. 40). Prophecy indicates that in the final analysis, ten ruling European leaders, probably representing ten nations, will surrender their sovereignty to the leader of a supranational government, in a final resurrection of the "Beast" of Revelation (13:12–13, 17).

In any European union, Germany would seek to dominate, just as it dominated during the era of the medieval "Holy Roman Empire." "[Former German] Chancellor Kohl has for many years declared his dissatisfaction with a common market of independent states, and believes it is German destiny not merely to lead a European union, but to dominate it" (Hilton, p. 38). Other German leaders have expressed this same sentiment.

There can be no doubt, in the mind of anyone familiar with European history and current affairs, that the Vatican would seek to influ-

ence and control the policy of a European super-state to achieve its own ends. Bible prophecy points to the same conclusion (Revelation 17). Adrian Hilton comments: "Rome's motto, *Semper Eadem* (always the same), can certainly be applied to both its desire to direct social thinking and its self-perceived divine mission to preside over a unified Europe, achievable through a dominating German state" (*op. cit.*, p. 38).

The job definition of a "watchman" is to watch, and to give warning when he sees danger approaching. When Christ told the Church to "watch," He assigned us to be watchmen (Mark 13:32–37). It is our collective task as "watchmen" to give witness of the good news of God's Kingdom, which will finally bring universal peace and prosperity. But it is also our duty to warn our brethren in the world and in the Church of unpleasant realities prophesied to affect mankind in the years to come.

Christ said: "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15). The "captain of the temple" walked his rounds at night. Any guard ("watchman") found sleeping was subject to having his garments set on fire (*The Temple*, Alfred Edersheim, p. 112)—hence Christ's warning to us. In the eyes of Jesus Christ, the Laodiceans are naked, and they are counseled to buy

of him gold tried in the fire, and white garments (Revelation 3:17–18). Can such people, who refuse to take part in the work of watching and warning, escape punishment?

Who is more likely to be caught napping, those who are watching and warning about the end-time national punishments God declares in his Word, or those who deny the warnings and say, in essence, that there is nothing to worry about, just "peace and safety"? The point of Jesus' parable of the ten virgins is for us to "watch" so that we will not be caught unawares (Matthew 25:13). None of us have to be caught asleep—but those who become lethargic and careless, ignoring their duty to "watch," will be!

Paul wrote: "For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:3–6).

Be vigilant and wary of false rumors and misleading doctrines in order to remain children of light. We must retain in our minds the light of truth if we are to watch successfully. ☐

Are You a Person After God's Own Heart?

(continued from page 6)

- spiritual nourishment that comes from God. Meditating on the meaning of God's word allows God to work with our minds and guide our thoughts in the direction of what is important to Him (Isaiah 55:8–9). Keep a record of how much time you spend in prayer, study and meditation. Strive to improve on how you use your time.
3. Determine to obey God, and expect resistance. Abraham, Daniel, Jesus Christ and others were rewarded for their determination to follow God's laws, and for their unwillingness to compromise with the truth they understood. The Scriptures state that God will pour out His Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). It is God's Spirit that enables us to become people after God's own heart.
 4. Develop real compassion for others, and be prepared to suffer a bit in the process. Jesus Christ came to this earth to suffer and die for mankind because of His love for human beings created in the image of God (John 3:16). In order to be effective rulers in the kingdom of God, we will have to understand the needs and feelings of those we will serve. God cares about others—and so must we.
 5. Learn to forgive. While God is just, He is also forgiving (Psalm 103:3). Jesus admonished His disciples

that if one wants to be forgiven, one must also forgive (Matthew 6:14–15). Forgiveness involves not only letting go of past offenses, but also being willing to reconcile and rebuild relationships. In learning to do this, we will become persons after God's own heart.

6. Stay focused on the "Big Picture." Jesus' ministry centered on preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14–15), warning the world of a coming judgment (Mark 13) and feeding the flock of God (John 21:15–17). The Apostles continued that work (Matthew 10:7–8; Acts 28:23–31). Our job is the same today (Matthew 10:23; 28:19–20). A person after God's own heart will focus on that same goal.
7. Never quit! Jesus finished the work He was given to do. He also warned that "no one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). By learning to keep our commitments, and persevering when things get difficult, we become individuals after God's own heart.

As Christians, we are called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and to learn to live by every word of God. Jesus was on the same wavelength as His Father—He was a man after God's own heart. The examples of Abraham, Moses, David, Hannah and many others are recorded in Scripture as examples for us to follow. We must learn from those examples and strive to become people after God's own heart, so we can be in His kingdom—because this is the real purpose for human existence. LCN

Living FAITH

(continued from page 3)

obviously, we *cannot* just "work up faith." Each of us must do his or her part in fervently studying the Word, meditating on the examples of faith in the Bible and on the things we see God do even in His Church and Work today. Then, we must CRY OUT to God in heartfelt prayer and fasting that our heavenly Father would give us the "gift" of faith through His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7–9).

Remember, God's Word tells us, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to

God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Building an atmosphere of faith in God's Church today is absolutely *vital*. We cannot even fully imagine the trials, tests, persecutions and difficulties which will come upon His people during the next several years. We will all *need* living faith in God. And to do the Work which God really wants us to do, we will have to walk with God, commune with God and wrap our minds around some of the direct statements of Jesus Christ such as John 14:11–12: "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake

of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."

Jesus also said, "When the Son of man comes, *will He really find faith on the earth?*" (Luke 18:8). Although the world will not have much faith, let us in God's true Church do everything we can to strengthen our faith—individually and collectively. For, as we have seen, without faith we *cannot please God*—and certainly we cannot do the great Work which He wants us, as His servants, to do in these latter days. LCN

Earnestly Fasting and Seeking God

(continued from page 2)

for water—even during the fast! Drink plenty of water ahead of time. *Do not* do any heavy work or exercise just before beginning the fast. Let your body and your mind “calm down.” Plan to take the day off work, if possible, or at least half a day. Or plan your fast on Sunday or on a day you are not fully engaged in other things. That way, you can *devote* yourself totally to resting, meditating and *seeking God* without undue interruption.

After the fast, it is best to eat a light, non-spicy meal at first and ease into your regular diet gradually. It is hard on a person to “gorge” himself with a big steak or huge meal right after fasting! And it does take away from that “extra edge” of zest and humility you may have gained during the fast. During the fast, stay out of the hot sun, take a nap or rest in the middle of the day and be sure you do not “overdo it.” If you have any health problems, get a check-up *before* fasting.

Spiritually, as you begin a fast, try to *focus* on the things of God. Remind yourself *why* you are fasting. And then draw close to God during the entire day or more that you are fasting through diligent Bible study, meditation and prayer. *Be careful not to let other things interfere!* For your own human nature, your family or friends, or even *Satan the Devil* at times, may distract you and try to get your mind on physical things, lusts, vanities, problems, unpaid bills, etc.

So especially during a period of fasting, “guard your mind.” And ask God to earnestly help you in “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Then, *concentrate* in a long, uninterrupted period of Bible study. Ask God—even *as you study*—to help you “feed” on Christ and fully drink in of Christ’s mind and of *His* will for your life (John 6:57).

During your fast, try to focus on those parts of the Bible that are personally corrective and instructive—such as most of the New Testament, Isaiah 53–60 and the Psalms. Then *meditate* carefully on what you have read. Apply it to *you!* Ask God to show *you* where *you* are wrong—or maybe falling short in any way.

Then, *take time* for long, unhurried periods of prayer and ask God with complete sincerity to help you repent of any wrongs, to clean you up and scrub you out and make you in *every way* more like Jesus Christ. Ask Him to help you to see yourself as *He* sees you, and to be willing to *change* and to *grow* to achieve the full stature of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:12–13).

Ask God fervently to help *all* of your brethren—and to help *all* in His Church—to draw close to Him and to honor Him as we should. Ask Him to help us be more truly sensitive to His will and respond more fervently in heart and mind to whatever He directs. Ask our Father in heaven to *pour out His Spirit* and to *empower* us to do the Work more as the Apostles did. Ask Him to grant us the “gifts” of His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12) and to grant us the “signs” Christ said would follow His faithful servants (Mark 16:17–18).

Brethren, if the vast majority of us begin to *cry out to God* in this way with *earnest study*, *servent prayer*, and with *meditation* and *fasting*, our Father and our God *will* hear us. He will fashion and mold us ever more perfectly into Christ’s image and will certainly *use us* more powerfully than ever as His “tools,” His “ambassadors” to help complete the Work of God among men today.

Brethren, I hope and pray that each of you will “catch the vision.” Somewhere on this earth—*before the end of this age*—a people of God will be used to powerfully “witness” to all nations (Matthew 24:14). These people will also be fashioned and molded by God and prepared to be kings and priests in a government soon to be set up on this earth (Revelation 2:26–27). You and I are getting older. This present world is just *not* going to bring us ultimate happiness and fulfillment, and certainly not eternal life. It is time we go “all out” to seek and to serve our God. It is time that we are far more sensitive to God and to the things of God—and that we become far more willing to utterly *forsake* this present world. Truly brethren, we all need to realize more fully that our puny, weak, extremely short physical lives are only a tiny part of the total universe around us—a world inhabited by angels, by demons and ultimately controlled by our Father in heaven. In all of this, we need to realize more profoundly our genuine *need* to put our hand in God’s hand and to walk humbly and prayerfully with Him, day by day, even hour by hour, now and forever.

If each of us begins a personal crusade to draw closer to God and to beseech Him to grant His faithful servants the *full power of His Spirit*, we in this Church will have a dramatic *impact* on this world far beyond our numbers. As the Apostle Paul described: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20–21).



Television Studio Hard at Work!

The Living Church of God television department has two main functions: to provide the stage, set, television equipment and support facilities for the production of the *Tomorrow's World* telecast, and to produce Sabbath and Holy Day sermons along with other productions seen by brethren around the world.

Each year, 51 weekly sermons are produced in English, Spanish and French. English-language sermons are recorded during weekly Sabbath services, while the Headquarters congregation listens. On Tuesday mornings, Mr. Mario Hernandez records weekly Spanish-language sermons at the studio. French-language sermons are recorded on Thursday mornings by Mr. Dibar Apartian.

In addition to weekly sermons, annual Holy Day sermons in all three languages are recorded for distribution to congregations and video groups that will not have a live speaker present for services. Internet video programs are an increasingly common project; already more than 50 have been produced, and more are underway. On top of all this, a "Behind the Work" video is produced each year, to be shown at the

Feast of Tabernacles. This schedule requires the television department to complete, on average, four new projects each week.

In its heyday, the Worldwide Church of God had several dozen employees in its television department. The Global Church of God



Evangelist Dibar Apartian records his weekly French sermon in the new headquarters studio facility.

operated with roughly a half-dozen full-time and part-time television department staffers. In the Living Church of God, this substantial workload is carried by just two individuals: Mr. Joe Rosignolo, our studio technician, and Mrs. Don Davis, who assists in the department.

Beginning late last year, Dr. Meredith inaugurated a special series

of Internet Video Bible Study programs. Mr. John Ogwyn's eight-part survey of Joshua and Judges was the first produced; the soundtrack will soon be available on audio cassettes in your Church library.

Dr. Meredith recorded a 32-part series on the Gospel of Matthew, which concluded in June; it too, should be available on audio cassette in the near future. Dr. Douglas Winnail's seven-part series on 1 Peter and 2 Peter ran throughout July and August, and will be followed by Dr. Jeff Fall's four-part series on Philippians, which will air shortly after the Feast of Tabernacles. Dr. Meredith hopes to record another series, covering the book of John, before too long. All of these completed series remain available in the Bible Study Library area of the Church Web site.

The Behind the Work video being prepared for the Feast of Tabernacles will feature the television department and its facilities, and will show how a telecast is planned, recorded, produced and completed. This special video will be shown during the sermonette period on the morning of the Last Great

"Must Play" Videos

From time to time, Dr. Meredith will deliver a Sabbath sermon to the San Diego congregation covering a topic that he feels the entire Church must be aware of. These sermons are sent to the field bearing a small oval sticker with the words "Must Play." Such sermons are to be viewed on the first Sabbath that the local schedule will permit, even in congregations where a minister may be present, as a means of informing the brethren and building unity throughout the entire Church, as all are able to hear what Dr. Meredith is saying at Headquarters. Recent "Must Play" sermons have covered such topics as the end-time Elijah, the doctrine of healing, and the importance of faith. If for some reason you miss a "Must Play" sermon, please ask to borrow it from your local congregation's library, or look for it in the online Sermon Library area of the official Church Web site at URL: <http://www.livingcog.org/slibrary.htm>.

Day at each Feast of Tabernacles site. Please pray with us that the assembling of the materials for this video will continue to go well, and that God will bless this production.

New Season of *Tomorrow's World*

The first programs of the upcoming season's *Tomorrow's World* telecasts were actually taped last spring. After a summer hiatus, Dr. Meredith and Mr. Ames again began recording new programs on Thursday, August 23. A full schedule of 40 programs is planned for the 2001–2002 season—the first season to be filmed entirely in our own studio, which was also used for the final tapings of last season's telecasts. Although the same number of programs will be taped this year as last year, Dr. Meredith and Mr. Ames

have changed the taping schedule to save the Work time and money, and are planning to tape the 40 programs on just ten “shoot-days”—down from last year's 14.

With the increasing number of booklets available (including at least two more planned for release by the end of 2001), Dr. Meredith and Mr. Ames expect to offer more booklets on the telecast this year, to complement the always-popular audio cassette offerings. Many do not realize that most of our booklets, when printed in appropriate quantities, cost no more than—or even somewhat less than—the audio cassette offerings.

Telecast responses continue to increase, with more than 36,000 received from January through mid-August 2001. Through August 2001, responses were up by approximately 23 percent over the same months of 2000. As of late August,

the telecast was available on 127 stations around the world, including 18 outside North America—with 34 of these added since the start of 2001.

Thanks to efficient production and increased response, the total cost per telecast response is declining substantially. Overall, it has dropped by more than 27 percent compared to the *World Ahead* telecast, according to Mr. Wayne Pyle, who keeps track of television response statistics for the Work.

As more and more stations begin airing the *Tomorrow's World* telecast, we look forward to further increases in telecast response, as more and more people hear—many for the first time—the Truth that this world so desperately needs! Please continue to keep the television department and its vitally important activities in your prayers.

—William Bowmer

Upcoming *Tomorrow's World* Telecasts

Every Sunday, 6:00 AM E.T., on WGN

| WGN AIR DATE | BROADCAST TITLE |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| September 2 | Should You Be Baptized? |
| September 9 | How Satan Deceives Christians |
| September 16 | The Harlot of Revelation 17 |

NEW SEASON BEGINS

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| September 23 | Rise and Fall of Nations |
| September 30 | Where Is Hell? |
| October 7 | When Will Christ Return? |
| October 14 | Why Were You Born? |
| October 21 | Does God Answer Your Prayers? |
| October 28 | Dangers of the Occult |
| November 4 | What Is Your Future Job? |
| November 11 | What Will Tomorrow's World Be Like? |
| November 18 | Earth in Turmoil |
| November 25 | Are We a Thankful Nation? |

The telecast is also available on more than 100 other television stations. To find the station and time most convenient for you, consult the inside back cover of *Tomorrow's World* magazine, or check the online listing on the *Tomorrow's World* Web site at: <http://www.tomorrowworld.org/television.htm>.

If the program is not available in your area, you may view it online at: <http://www.tomorrowworld.org>.

IN LOVING MEMORY

Even death has not stopped Living Church of God member Raymond Jorgensen from sowing a new crop. Mr. Jorgensen, of Kimballton, Iowa, died on July 3, 2001, after steadily declining health. He was the last of his immediate family, being preceded in death by his older brother Emmert in December of last year. His mother, Anna, died in 1980, and his father, Chris, died in 1969. They were all faithful to God's way of life. An aunt, Tomina Christiansen, was also a Church member until her death.

Graveside services were conducted on July 12 by Brian Pomicter, an elder in the Omaha congregation. Raymond and Emmert lived together on their farm where they raised totally organic crops. Their decision to go organic expressed their deeply held desire not to do harm to their neighbor by polluting his food with poisons.

Both were quiet, and staunchly faithful to God's way of life. After Emmert's death last year, Raymond continued to work the farm, and faithfully made the hour-and-a-half trip each way to Omaha for services each Sabbath. When he did not show up for services one week, questions arose and it was discovered that he had died while alone in his home.

After his death, it was revealed that he had willed the family farm and all his belongings to the Church. Mr. Jorgensen understood that to produce a crop you have to make an investment—and his generous contribution toward preaching the Gospel to the world and feeding the flock will no doubt bear pollution-free fruit for the kingdom of God. He will be greatly missed in the Omaha congregation.

Birth

Kurt and Rhonda Rogers, of the Atlanta, Georgia congregation, announce the March 13, 2001 birth of their daughter Kylee Jayanna Rogers. Kylee is the granddaughter of James and Phyllis Wells, and the great-granddaughter of Thomas and Florene DeBerry, both of the Kansas City, Missouri congregation.

Anniversary

William and JoAnne Schutz of Glendale, California, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on July 28, 2001. The Schutz' have two daughters and eight grandchildren. Mr. Schutz is a deacon in God's Church.

LCG Web Update

Activity on the official Living Church of God Web sites continues to increase. The two English-language Web sites—www.livingcog.org and www.tomorrowworld.org—continue to reach both new people and those with a previous Church of God background.

As of mid-August, activity from 126 countries could be documented, meaning that the Church Web sites had reached not just all the major industrialized countries in the developed world, but also many smaller and third-world countries. Recent activity has come from nations including Cambodia, Ghana, Haiti, Kyrgystan, Vietnam and Yemen.

In 2001, through mid-August, the Church Web sites have averaged more than 1,200 visits per day. In 2001, more than 78,000 unique visitors had come to the sites as of mid-August, with more than 14,000 visiting two or more times. These numbers compare favorably to 2000. In all of 2000, the Church Web sites received visits from slightly more than 86,000 unique visitors. If the current rate continues through the end of 2001, this year will have seen an increase in visitors of approximately 30 percent.

Another encouraging area of increase is the amount of material downloaded. In all of 2000, visitors downloaded a little more than 370 gigabytes of material from the Church sites. Already in 2001, with more than four months remaining in the year, visitors have downloaded more than 430 gigabytes of sermons, *Tomorrow's World* telecasts, Internet Video Bible Study programs, booklets and *Tomorrow's World* magazines.

Please continue to keep the Church Web effort in your prayers!

Commentary

Sin Is a Reproach to Any People

By Richard F. Ames

A *USA Today* article reported on a group called Advocates for Youth, which compared sexual activity of teenagers in four countries, and found that teens in the United States become sexually active at 15.8 years of age on the average, earlier than their counterparts elsewhere. U.S. women between the ages of 15 and 19 have live births at a rate four times that of women in Germany, and have an abortion rate more than double the abortion rate of teen girls in France!

Teens—and adults—ought to know the physical risks and consequences of their sexual activity. But there is another dimension to the problem. It is not just about statistics. It is not just about social strategies and social consequences. It is also about the character of a nation.

Just as there are physical effects for physical causes, there are spiritual effects for spiritual causes. There are unseen spiritual laws just as there are unseen natural laws, which affect human beings just as predictably. The degree to which we have internalized those spiritual laws determines the quality of our character—whether we reflect righteousness or sin in our attitude and behavior. There is a cause for every effect. Scripture tells us: “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18, *KJV*).

Sin damages not only the body, but also the mind. As the Creator of the human body and mind tells us: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, *KJV*). Sin brings the penalty of pain, suffering and eternal death.

In the eyes of God, purposely taking the life of a child is murder—whether the child is born or still in the womb of its mother. Wholesale abortion is a heinous crime and a sin that results in the eternal death penalty. Sexual immorality is another sin that results in the eternal death penalty. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). A person can be forgiven after repentance and baptism in the name of Christ, as the Apostle Peter states in Acts 2:38, but make no mistake: sin brings about death—eternal death.

Anciently, a particularly sinful nation called the Amorites killed their children, too! God told Abraham that “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete” (Genesis 15:16). Yes, God is patient, but the iniquity of our western world is fast becoming complete—or full. Notice what evil practices the Amorites indulged in, and consider whether we in our western world practice similar wicked behaviors. What did the Amorites do? The *NIV Study Bible* tells us that Canaanite “‘worship’ was polytheistic and included child sacrifice, idolatry, religious prostitution and divination.” The wicked Amorites were judged by God and paid a national penalty.

The immoral, sinful, idolatrous, and murderous practices of our western nations will also be judged! There is still time to repent and change, but if we, as the ancient Amorites, persist in living increasingly licentious and evil lives, we will be judged and pay the penalty of individual and national punishment and destruction.

God tells us there are consequences to our physical and moral decisions and practices. “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

Which shall it be for your nation? And which shall it be for you?

This commentary can be found on the Church Web page, www.livingcog.org, in the Commentary Library, along with many other commentaries on key topics facing our world.