

THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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The Prudent Man

Dear Brethren,

God twice inspired this warning in the book of Proverbs: “A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished” (Proverbs 22:3; 27:12).

We understand that when Scripture repeats a warning or principle, it is especially important—God wants us to take special note of it. This particular proverb applies to a multitude of circumstances. Noah and his family, for example, escaped the worldwide flood because he responded to a warning of evil ahead. “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

Daniel 12:1–4 and Matthew 24:21–22 give signs pointing to these unique times, indicating that we are at the end of the age. There have always been difficult days in this world, but the speed with which events are moving, the destructive power now available, and the divisions in our world point to unprecedented evil ahead. People are frightened and wonder where to hide themselves—how to *save* themselves.

Thankfully, God has given us an outline of history—including its outcome! He has also given us the hope of eternal life, for which we should be even more thankful, because sooner or later, no matter what our personal circumstances, we all have an expiration date. We also have promises of protection and help in times of need. Yes, we who are called have much for which to give thanks.

Biblical Principles of Prudence

Of course, this does not mean life for any of us is “peaches and cream,” as the expression goes. But are we prepared for what is

about to hit us? We cannot know exactly when, but we are on a runaway train heading downhill and picking up speed—with the bridge out at the bottom. The COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020. In 2021, there was disaster upon disaster. And now, in 2022, when many thought circumstances couldn’t get any worse, they have.

Inflation is crushing those on fixed and low incomes. Fuel prices have changed how people live, forcing many to choose what to do without. The supply chain is in disarray. Store shelves are empty. Employers cannot find workers to fill jobs. America’s borders are the stuff of ridicule. And consider the fallout from Russia invading Ukraine. Fertilizer prices have skyrocketed—if fertilizer is even available. Wheat and other grains cannot move out of Ukrainian ports. And Germany has decided to rearm, something that we in God’s Church have said would happen.

For years, the Church has warned members to prepare themselves for challenging times. While it is good to stock up on food, water, and some cash, let us never forget that it all can be taken away in a moment by a tornado, earthquake, fire, flood, or thief. Building a luxurious bomb-proof shelter is *not* something most of us can or *should* do. The *only* reliable protection is in Jesus Christ. God tells us that faithful members of His Church who are doing His Work at the end will be supernaturally protected (Revelation 3:10; 12:13–17). Nevertheless, to make reasonable and prudent decisions is wise and fulfills scriptural admonitions.

The example of Elijah during a three-and-a-half year time of testing and trial upon Israel is also an example for us; Elijah had his job to do, and God supplied what only He could. Elijah had to hide, camping out by a brook for his supply of water. But

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God miraculously supplied Elijah's food by ravens—the Amazon and FedEx of that day! But then the water dried up and he had to move to another country.

Neither was it a picnic for other people of God. The “sons of the prophets” were hidden in caves, relying on the bravery and generosity of Obadiah, a servant in the house of Ahab, for food and water. Consider the logistics of sneaking off and providing both food and water to 100 men each day. Obadiah may have had help, but whom could you trust in an atmosphere where Ahab’s wife Jezebel was busy slaughtering every servant of God she could find (1 Kings 18:2–4)? Ahab’s reign was a frightening time for all of God’s servants, as we see from Obadiah’s response to Elijah (vv. 13–18). Three-and-a-half years can be a long time under such circumstances! Consider that it has been only about two-and-a-half years since COVID lockdowns began around March 2020.

Watch and Be Sober

Biblical prophecy indicates rough times ahead, and all world events indicate the same. God’s Church has foretold this for decades. Good times and bad times seesaw back and forth, and some days will be more difficult than others, but we seem to have entered a new stage. We must not be surprised if very dramatic events suddenly occur. Governments are working behind the scenes to control their events and their citizens. Leading nations are considering—and already experimenting with—Central Bank Digital Cryptocurrencies (CBDCs). These are *not* the mark of the Beast, but CBDCs would give central control to governments to enforce that mark. Just as the Canadian government locked down bank accounts of striking truckers, so CBDCs would make it easy to control any individual or group of individuals seen as not conforming to prescribed policies.

I am not predicting it, but a worldwide depression is not out of the question. Neither is an American civil war. Who would have thought wheat flour would be scarce in Belgium and Germany, that cooking oil would be rationed in parts of England, and that frantic American parents would be scurrying around for baby formula? And these countries still have it good compared to parts of Africa, where some of our members are facing real food scarcity.

We have been praying for decades, “Your kingdom come.” But it is not here yet. It appears that we have a few years left even before the Great Tribulation, but one truth seems obvious: A time of trouble such as we have never experienced is rapidly closing in on us. As the Apostle Paul admonished the Thessalonians, “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 5:4–6).

Let us remember Jesus’ reassuring words:

Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.... But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:28, 34–36).

Hebrews 13:5 gives us good advice, especially for times when life is uncertain. “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”

A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished. We are told that the demise of the Israelite nations will come suddenly on an unsuspecting world (Isaiah 30:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1–9). God expects us to do what we can for ourselves—and we must remember that—but there is something immensely more important. Having a close relationship with the Ruler of the universe must *never* be neglected. How often do we put off fasting, or tell ourselves that we will spend more time in prayer or Bible study *someday*? Brethren, maybe that day is *today*.



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EDITORIAL

By Gerald E. Weston

What Is the Spirit in Man?

Ambassador College students were among the first to be introduced to a doctrine God was revealing through His servant Herbert W. Armstrong—the “spirit in man.” I was among those students on the Pasadena campus and remember some of the details of how it came about.

The mid to late 1960s was a long time ago, so I may not have every detail precisely correct. However, a bright young student came to Ambassador College while pursuing a doctorate at the University of California, Los Angeles. This man’s doctoral thesis explored the non-physical component of the human mind. He demonstrated through his studies that as the size and complexity of animal brains increase, so does the intelligence of the animals, but when it comes to human beings, the intelligence level far exceeds what it should be based on the size of the human brain.

Why? And why are the creatures with larger brains than ours not superior to man?

Both Mr. Armstrong and this young student recognized that there is something about the mind of man that lacks a physical explanation, but neither of them had the *full* explanation. Yet the answer they sought had been in the Bible ever since that book of all books had been completed near the end of the first century!

How much this answer was understood in antiquity, we do not know. But, at least in modern times, it was not understood by God’s Church until God began to open Mr. Armstrong’s eyes to it. Yet, once it is pointed out, the doctrine is obvious and easy to understand—and it is clearly biblical. Further, it lets us understand questions that cannot otherwise be answered.

An Immortal Soul Is Not the Answer

Mr. Armstrong saw early on that the doctrine of the immortal soul is one of the greatest deceptions ever foisted upon mankind. It is not only a satanic lie on its own, but also leads to other doctrinal errors. Consider: If one has an immortal soul, what happens to it at death? Does it go to heaven? To hell? To purgatory? What happens to the soul of one who has never heard the name of Jesus Christ? What about infants and children? Is there a name other than Jesus Christ by which we may be saved?

All these are questions arising out of the immortal soul lie and the many false doctrines spawned by that lie.

It is important to know what a human spirit is *not*—and it is *not* an immortal soul!

Then, in the mid to late 1960s, Mr. Armstrong began to point the Church to scriptures—which had been in the Bible all along—that spoke of what the human spirit *is*: a spirit given to man that separates him from animals. Once one sets aside the erroneous immortal soul doctrine, the truth begins to become clear. It is easier to learn something new correctly than to understand truth when the mind is filled with falsehoods.

The idea of an immortal soul began in the Garden of Eden, as did many other false doctrines. God instructed the first man and woman about two trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The latter tree symbolized man choosing to determine good and evil himself, and this is the tree our first parents chose. God told them that to choose this tree would bring death (Genesis 2:17).

Satan, in the form of a serpent, told them that God had lied! “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die’” (Genesis 3:4). That was only part of what he told them, as seen by God’s question in verse 11: “And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?’”

Notice the dual nature of the devil’s lie: He denied that Adam and Eve would die and induced them to sin and feel shame about their naked mortal bodies. This dual teaching was the beginning of the immortal soul lie: *The body is evil, but there is a soul in it that will live forever*. It was Satan, not God, who introduced shame—and the lie that man is immortal.

This is why most of the major religions believe in an immortal soul in one form or another. As *Encyclopedia.com* informs us, “With all their diversity of beliefs, the major religions are in accord in one great teaching: Human beings are immortal and their spirit comes from a divine world and may eventually return there” (“How the Major Religions View the Afterlife”).

Regarding professing Christian beliefs, “human beings seem always to have had some notion of a shadowy double that survives the death of the body. But the idea of the soul as a mental entity, with intellectual and moral qualities, interacting with a physical organism but capable of continuing after its dissolution [death],

derives in Western thought from Plato and entered into Judaism during approximately the last century before the Common Era and thence into Christianity” (“Christianity,” *Britannica.com*).

The Problem Began in the Garden

Why is it that people do not believe God? They may quote it, but they do not truly accept His simple statement: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16–17). Neither do they believe the Apostle Paul’s plain declaration that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

And what about the most famous verse of the Bible? “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The seventh chapter of our booklet *John 3:16: Hidden Truths of the Golden Verse* presents more biblical evidence to prove that we are *mortal* beings.

Understanding of the biblical definition of the soul has been corrupted. The word translated *soul* in English comes from the Hebrew *nephesh*. Sometimes it is translated “soul,”

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other times “body” or “creature.” We learn from Genesis 2:7 that man does not *have* a soul, but rather *is* a soul (*King James Version, Jubilee Bible 2000, World English Bible*).

If man is a *living soul*, this indicates that there can be a *dead soul*! That is precisely what several passages tell us (*Leviticus 21:11; Numbers 6:6; 19:11*). In each of these scriptures, *nephesh* is translated “body.” Then there is *Ezekiel 18*, which translates *nephesh* as *soul* and tells us directly that a soul can die (vv. 4, 20)!

No wonder the *New Bible Commentary: Revised* breaks with popular “Christian” doctrine when commenting on Matthew 10:28: “The soul in biblical thought is not immortal, except when new life is conferred upon it through Christ.” So, while this truth is known in some circles, it rarely trickles down to the average churchgoer.

The Source of Man’s Intelligence

The doctrine of the spirit in man has nothing in common with the doctrine of the immortal soul, even though it is easy to confuse the two. While man does not have an ever-living soul, he does have a spirit within him. “But there is a spirit in

man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding” (Job 32:8). We also read of “the burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him” (Zechariah 12:1).

It is difficult to unlearn error. That is why it must be emphasized that this spirit in man is not the same as the false concept of an immortal soul. It is something entirely different. The spirit in man has no separate consciousness that lives on after death. Scripture is explicit about that. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Whatever else this spirit is, it does not carry on with consciousness after death. “Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans [or “thoughts” (*KJV, JUB, WEB*)] perish” (Psalm 146:3–4). When a man dies, the spirit departs, and the man has no consciousness of anything until resurrection.

Paul gives us the clearest explanation of this spirit and, in doing so, gives us the clue to one of life’s greatest mysteries—why is man so high above the animals intellectually? The difference is staggering. How can man send men to the moon and bring them back safely? Consider everything that made it possible: metal, machines, computers, mathematical calculations, condensing oxygen into liquid form, drilling for and refining petroleum products, transmitting signals over vast distances, and so much more.

No animal, no matter how large its brain, comes remotely close to the intellect of man. The gulf could hardly be greater.

In the first part of 1 Corinthians 2:11, Paul explains this difference: “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?” Without that human spirit, man would be no more intelligent than the beasts of the earth.

A dog or cat has a brain that can respond to stimuli received through its senses. Animals’ brains give them instincts and basic functions, letting you know when they are hungry, when they need to go outside, etc. They have memory enough to learn to avoid danger and know who feeds them. They even have differences in personality. They are marvelous creatures that we dearly love—but they cannot build a computer.

How different man is! The spirit in man empowers the brain not merely to learn, but to think, reason, calculate, invent, and innovate. Mankind can not only read and write, but can contemplate eternity. “He [God] has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity in their hearts,

except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

This spirit essence empowers man to think on a level far above the animals, but it does not of itself think. It does not live of itself. It does not experience pain or suffering. The human body and brain do that.

The average human being is totally oblivious to this. Unless he studies the subject of the human mind, he probably never even *considers* why he is different from the animals—he simply accepts that he is. Paul explains why only a few understand how the human mind truly works: The operating power of God's Holy Spirit enables us to understand things that those without God's Spirit cannot. In the second half of 1 Corinthians 2:11, Paul writes, "Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God."

So, we find two spirits. The first we are given as a result of being human, made in the form and image of God but with temporary, physical life. The second only comes to those who are called, are granted repentance and repent of sin—thus responding to God working in them—are baptized, and have hands laid upon them by the ministry in order to receive God's Spirit.

But why did God empower the mind of man by means of some kind of spirit essence? Could He not just as easily have given him a more powerful brain? The answer is amazing!

God declared at the very beginning that He had a special purpose for us; He said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26–27).

God created us to have a special relationship with Him, unlike any other living physical creature. This relationship is revealed in Paul's letter to the Romans: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (8:14). This Parent/child relationship is also spelled out in Hebrews 2:5–18.

This special family relationship begins with the *joining of the spirit in man with the Holy Spirit of God*. Notice: "The Spirit Himself [the Holy Spirit] bears witness with our spirit [the spirit in man] that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:16–17).

Imagine. Children of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ! I have used the masculine in this article for simplicity's sake, as the English language for centuries used masculine forms rather than neuter to indicate a group of both sexes, but God does not leave women out of His plan:

As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "come out from among them and be separate, says the LORD. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:16–18).

This Father/child relationship is more than figurative. As we read above, the Spirit of God unites with the spirit in man. What we see here is conception, such as when a sperm and egg come together in the body of a woman. The egg is like the human spirit, while the seed represents the Holy Spirit, as shown in 1 John 3:9: "Whoever has been [begotten] of God does not [practice] sin, for His seed [Greek: *sperma*] remains in him; and he cannot [practice] sin, because he has been [begotten] of God."

The Lesson for Us

What an amazing plan God is working out here below! Understanding the spirit in man opens a whole new vista. It explains how God is recording everything about us. Just as a tape, compact disc, or memory stick records information, so the spirit in man records who we are, what we look like, the knowledge we have learned, and the character—or lack thereof—that we have built during our lifetimes.

Our bodies will decay upon death and return to the dust from which they came, but the spirit in man will have preserved a record that will be "plugged into" a new body. If the Holy Spirit has united with our human spirit, that new body will be a spirit body of radiant power (1 Corinthians 15:35–49)! Others will have to wait for the second resurrection to have that opportunity.

Just as the combined sperm and egg must begin to grow within the mother, so must we grow following the conception brought about by the union of these two spirits. We are not to be "figurative" children, but truly sired, engendered by the Father, eventually to be spirit-born children of God at the resurrection, if we multiply our minas (Luke 19:12–27).

We were not called to sit back and do nothing. We were called to do a Work!

This is also why it is so important for us to draw close to Him, to respond to the promptings of the Spirit—to grow in grace, knowledge, and holy, righteous character. As the Master Potter, with our earnest cooperation, God will mold and shape us into His spiritual image and nature, crafting each of us into the unique child of His that He wants us to become.

"But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand" (Isaiah 64:8). ^(N)



Beware of “Special Knowledge”

By **Phil Sena**

Adestructive pursuit has plagued the Church of God for centuries. Perhaps surprisingly, it often starts with pure motives—yet it frequently leads to pride, rebellion, and division. It did so in the first-century Church, and still does in God’s Church today. The pursuit of “special knowledge” is one of Satan’s most insidious and effective tools for attacking the people of God, and the problems it causes can be devastating. Let’s examine some of the effects of this pursuit, and then see what we can personally do to rein it in.

We read in the New Testament that within just 20 years of Christ’s resurrection, heretical ideas had begun to infiltrate some of the congregations of God’s Church. In one way, the various backgrounds of the Church’s converts make this unsurprising—each brought a certain perspective or worldview based on his or her background, experience, and influences, and many of these influences had pagan origins. Despite having repented and been baptized, many people were still influenced by these worldviews in ways that affected their understanding of God’s truth. Each nationality had certain propensities and inclinations—Jewish converts were heavily influenced by Mosaic ritual and Hebrew tradition, Romans were influenced by pagan philosophies, and Greeks were enamored with intellectualism. Acts 17:21 says of the Athenians that they “spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.”

These converging backgrounds and influences began to affect the Church, and they all polluted the purity and simplicity of Christ’s message and caused *factions* to arise. For an example of this dissension, we can go to Galatians 1:6–7, where Paul said that those who insisted that Gentiles must be circumcised were actually perverting the Gospel of Christ.

Paul also corrected the brethren in Corinth for their acceptance of contrary views: “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not ac-

cepted—you may well put up with it!” (2 Corinthians 11:3–4). The Corinthian brethren had been fostering an environment of tolerance for compromised doctrine and morality, and Paul made very clear that these ideas were not at all part of the true Gospel; rather, they were *opposed* to it.

Intellectual Vanity

Notice that Paul referred to the serpent deceiving Eve in the Garden of Eden. We find the account of this deception in Genesis 3:1–6:

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*”

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

The serpent, Satan, appealed to Eve’s intellectual vanity. In effect, he was offering her *special knowledge*. The appeal of having special information goes back to the very first humans, and Satan played on that desire—in fact, he still does.

Peter addressed the growing problem around 68 AD, 19 years after the letter to the Galatians:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on them-

selves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber (2 Peter 2:1–3).

Notice that Peter uses the term “false prophets,” referring to people who claimed special insight. Such people, he says, are motivated by *covetousness*—whether they are coveting power, prestige, respect, or something else. Christ’s Apostles, on the other hand, clearly had the *authority* to preach as they did. 2 Peter 1:16–18 reminds us that, unlike those who claimed to have “new truth,” the Apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ Himself. What’s more, Peter says, “No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation [origin], for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (vv. 20–21). This has *always* been how God works to reveal the truth.

Nevertheless, the damage had been done, and the Church was never the same. In many ways, this parallels the challenges faced by the Philadelphia era of God’s Church. When that era began and the Church was small, there was innocence. Later, as the Church grew through the 1950s and 1960s, there was excitement. But with the growth came the inevitable tares among the wheat.

As Dr. Roderick C. Meredith explained many times, there have been many fractures over doctrine throughout the years, including the major fracture three decades ago that we now call “the apostasy.” One common thread through many of these splits was someone claiming to have “special knowledge.” The unfortunate result of this is always further division of God’s people. Yet, for many, their path toward “special knowledge” started as a sincere and innocent pursuit of deeper spiritual understanding. Nevertheless, somewhere along the line, they reached their own conclusion about a doctrinal matter that differed from the established teachings of God’s Church.

A Dangerous Path

The progression from innocent curiosity to arrogant rebellion usually goes something like this: First, a person notices something in a scripture that piques his interest—it’s something he hasn’t noticed before, but it seems to merit further study. Leaping to his mind as a result of this curiosity is a *theory* that, for one reason or another, is very attractive to him.

This person then gathers all the scriptures and other documentation—lexicons, commentaries, Google search results, etc.—that seem to support his theory. But here is the danger: Does he honestly consider the evidence he finds that does not support his theory? Has he seriously studied what

the Church teaches on the topic? Or is he studying to show his new idea correct, rather than to understand God’s word more fully?

Because the Internet spreads almost every idea imaginable, it is easy to feel validated by finding others who share belief in his newfound theory. Once he feels validated, his theory becomes, in his mind, *Truth*—with a capital T. Believing he has discovered special knowledge, he begins to share it with people offline, including members of his Church congregation. If he receives positive reactions, he grows bolder in spreading his “*Truth*” and starts to look for further special knowledge that will gain him more positive attention.

But what does he do if he receives negative reactions? The humble Christian approach is to go to God in prayer and to ask God’s ministers to help him understand what he might be misunderstanding. Too often, however, pride was behind the “special knowledge” in the first place, and though he feels superior to those who do not share his knowledge, he retreats within his own mind, still privately believing his own ideas but unwilling to examine those ideas honestly in the light of God’s word.

Either way, such a proud individual almost inevitably starts finding other points on which he believes the Church is wrong, and he repeats the above steps—either gaining an audience or internalizing his attitude of superior knowledge. His demeanor and attitude change, and his attendance at Sabbath services becomes sporadic. All along, he keeps up a dialogue with others who believe the same things he does.

By the time he tells his minister about his new beliefs, he is no longer seeking to learn. He is seeking to teach, rejecting all explanations of Church teachings or refutations of his mistaken beliefs. He then leaves God’s Church. He might join another group, he might stay “solo” and rely on the Internet for his study and fellowship, or he might start a group of his own. Whatever he does, he is far from the humble place where he began; he now sees himself as a chosen vessel for special knowledge, and as such, he will eventually disagree with whomever he aligns himself, because he now has the delusion of knowing more than anyone else. If he goes far enough, he will become, in his own mind, the sole authority of God’s truth, ending up completely alone and disconnected from the Body of Christ—the Body that, tasked with doing the Work, now has at least one less person to help with doing that Work.

The Issue Is Attitude

The only “winner” in this scenario is Satan, who has once again worked on someone in the same way he worked on Eve. In addition to appealing to people’s intellectual vanity, he also works on the ego, causing them to feel slighted. With Eve, he used, *God is not fair—He is holding something back from you*.

And Satan uses the same tactic today. What's interesting is that doctrine is rarely the true beginning of the journey: Many times, before the person "gains special knowledge," he has already been offended by something or someone in the Church. Perhaps there is something that he doesn't agree with, or his feelings were hurt by an "insensitive" statement or a slight (usually by someone in authority). The person allows a root of bitterness to spring up. Then, believing that he has "special knowledge" the Church lacks, he soon embraces the idea that those who disagree with him can't be in "God's true Church."

Look at the tragic results: Another schism in the Body, thereby diminishing the Church's effectiveness in performing its mission of preaching the Gospel. Another person is now without the nurture and protection of the Church, deluded that he, and he alone, is being used by God to reveal truth.

The particular doctrines in dispute are actually beside the point, whether they involve calendar issues, "sacred names," the true Gospel, or any one of a hundred other old, tired controversies. Once people start down this path, their argumentative and defiant attitudes become the issue. Paul told Timothy to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith"

Look at the tragic results: Another schism in the Body, thereby diminishing the Church's effectiveness in performing its mission of preaching the Gospel. Another person is now without the nurture and protection of the Church, **deluded that he, and he alone, is being used by God to reveal truth.**

(1 Timothy 1:3–4). How sad that these people have forgotten the point of the Gospel: "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm" (vv. 5–7).

Brethren, be on guard against Satan's lies that play on our vanity. Beware of the danger of thinking you have special knowledge—God doesn't work this way!

Remain Humble

God gave a warning to those who take upon themselves the prerogative of spreading "insight" that is not clearly supported by God's inspired word. Deuteronomy 13:1–5 reveals that *anyone* who leads others away from God and the truth is

guilty of an incredibly serious offense. But that warning is not *only* to the person claiming to have special knowledge. God says in verse 3 that He is testing those who *listen to* what the person says.

Those claiming to have special knowledge will always be around, but part of the guilt of spreading it is on the *listeners*. Some people have "itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:3–4) and are looking for "new ideas." We all need to judge the validity of any idea, comparing it with God's word, as the Bereans did (Acts 17:11, cf. 1 John 4:1).

What God has revealed through His word—all of it—is more than sufficient for our growth as Christians (2 Timothy 3:16–17). We know from this word that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He started His Church, and that He provided a structure for doctrinal integrity and teaching within that Church (Ephesians 4:11–14; 1 Timothy 3:15). There is no need—and no room—for individuals claiming "special knowledge" to set themselves above other brethren and presume to instruct them in that knowledge.

Does this mean that we should avoid personal study and talking to others about the word of God? No—we are *commanded* to study to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), and to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18), which requires study.

But the *attitude* behind Bible study is all-important. Are we striving to become more like Jesus Christ or to become important in our own eyes (Proverbs 3:7)?

What guards us against being seduced by the allure of special knowledge? Developing the virtue of *humility* guards us against many dangerous spiritual pitfalls. By associating with the humble instead of inflating ourselves above others with our knowledge (Romans 12:16), we become more like

Christ, who set the perfect example. He had vast knowledge as the Son of God—yet was still a servant of all. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

The allure of "special knowledge" has seduced many since Eve was deceived in the Garden of Eden. It is one of Satan's great deceptions and one of his most dangerous fiery darts—a deadly trap that leads to arrogance and eventual isolation from God's plan and purpose. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), and as we read in Ephesians 4, He leads His people to the truth through the authority He has established in His Church. By allowing Him to lead us that way, we will remain steadfastly within the safety of the Body of Christ, now and until the end of the age.

Remain humble, brethren, and watch out for those who claim to have special knowledge. (LN)



Counterfeit Liberty

By **Mark Sandor**

The Declaration of Independence of the United States famously declares that liberty is a God-given right of all men. The second sentence of that document reads, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” This phrase has been taught to American schoolchildren for centuries and has been exported through American cultural norms to reach almost every part of the world.

Yet what exactly is liberty? Is it always a good thing? Those of us in God’s Church need to ask, *What does the Bible have to say about this?*

Give Me Liberty, or Give Me...?

Liberty is generally defined as having the power to act as one pleases. Therefore, one of the most vital questions all governments must answer is *What decisions are individuals at liberty to make for themselves, and what decisions are the responsibility of government to make for the good of all?* Mankind has long debated this question. Multiple forms of government have been tried, varying in the balance of individual liberty versus the restrictions of civil authorities.

Even the American founders struggled with these concepts: George Washington had to put down the Whiskey Rebellion, John Adams used the Alien and Sedition Acts to imprison political rivals, and Thomas Jefferson—author of the Declaration of Independence—owned slaves. It is acknowledged as one of the great ironies of history that the man who wrote that all men are created equal and have the right to liberty was himself responsible for keeping hundreds of his fellow humans in bondage!

However, America’s founders fell into the same trap that all humanly devised governments have fallen into: They rejected God’s law. And, as you might have guessed, the only authority that can validly make the distinction between personal liberties and the responsibilities of government is God Himself, and His law teaches the difference.

“But wait!” one might exclaim. “Isn’t liberty always good?” That is what most Americans have been taught in

school, and the precept is reinforced by many commentators today. Many Americans would assume that absolute liberty is *always* beneficial, but they might be surprised to see that the Bible says otherwise.

To be clear, the Bible does teach individual liberties and responsibilities, and it admonishes the prudent use of them. The Year of Jubilee in ancient Israel was a time when liberty was proclaimed to all the people (Leviticus 25:10), and Jesus Christ will proclaim liberty at His return (Isaiah 61:1). The Apostle Paul writes that Christians have liberty from the Pharisaical mindset of vainly attempting to earn our salvation. He discusses this in Galatians 5:1, especially citing the example of circumcision. James describes the Ten Commandments as a “Law of Liberty” in James 1:25 and 2:12. The context of James 2 shows that Christians are liberated from the consequences of sin when we learn from the law to avoid and *repent* of sin!

However, these are not the only times the word liberty is used in the Bible. The Apostle Peter provides strong warnings about misusing liberty. 2 Peter 2 goes through a history of rebellions against God and His liberating law. Peter quickly mentions the angelic rebellion, the unrestrained society before the flood in Noah’s day, the ungodliness of Sodom, and the wickedness of Balaam. What do these rebellions have in common? They all promised a false, counterfeit liberty: “For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them *liberty*, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage” (2 Peter 2:18–19).

Peter here addresses one of the major problems facing humanity throughout history: Mankind can be convinced that it should be liberated from God and His moral law! Instead of relying on God’s law in making our major decisions and guiding our lives, we too often listen to Satan’s lie that we know better than our Creator. Satan has been amazingly successful at that—his first victims were Adam and Eve, to whom he promised liberty with “great swelling words of emptiness” before leaving our ancestors in bondage to sin and the consequences of rebelling against God.

Many professing Christians accept a false gospel, believing they are “liberated” from God’s law by Christ’s death. The proof of that conviction is readily apparent in how people treat God’s law, and the Ten Commandments in particular. Most Americans assume the personal “liberty” to break the Sabbath by keeping a different day—or not keeping *any* day! Sexual “liberty” has overtaken the nation as people commit adultery in violation of the Seventh Commandment and the related statutes forbidding fornication, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, etc. We see our society suffering from widespread commandment-breaking, even while the commandment-breakers frequently celebrate the “liberty” to do as one pleases!

Who Gives Them the Right?

This should not be too surprising, as the Bible warns that “liberty” can often be a cloak for vice (1 Peter 2:16). Peter was inspired to include this warning while reminding us to respect civil leaders. Speaking through Peter, God commands Christians to submit to “every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors” (1 Peter 2:13–14). After warning about false liberty, Peter continues by exhorting us, “Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17). Clearly, another warning about counterfeit liberty concerns how Christians respond to their civil leaders.

Sadly, many who disagree with their civil leaders ignore these words of Peter, preferring Acts 5:29, which explains that

Try to apply 1 Corinthians 8 to your own life. Are there things that you have the liberty to do—both biblical and secular liberty to do—that are **not worth doing because they cause others to stumble?**

we must obey God rather than men when it is impossible to do both. However, 1 Peter 2 and Romans 13 make plain that we must diligently strive to obey *both* kinds of authority if we can. We should have a mindset of obedience and submission *first* and only reject legitimate human authority when it contradicts Scripture.

COVID-19 brought this issue to the forefront, as many Americans and others felt their liberty was infringed by various civil mandates. And from a civil, secular perspective, those liberties might very well have been infringed! Yet what does the Bible say about these topics? God’s Church has published several Bible studies on these issues, and they are all available to read at *Members.LCG.org*, so I will not rehash them here. The biggest issue for the Church is to maintain an attitude of obedience to as many of the civil mandates as we reasonably can. While there is nothing generally wrong

with taking advantage of the rights afforded to us by civil government (cf. Acts 22:25–29), as Peter points out, a mindset of obedience helps us “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” when we submit to civil authorities when we can within the scope of God’s law.

Just imagine if the civil government started to institute truly bizarre laws taking away some of our civil liberties—but not involving the breaking of any Scriptural command. How about “Everyone must wear purple at least once a week?” That would be a silly law with no practical benefit, but would you be disobeying the Bible by submitting to it? Perhaps civil authorities will declare that all chili must contain pickles or there will be dire consequences. Would you disobey, declaring your liberty to have pickle-free chili? What Bible verse would you quote to resist this ordinance? (For the record, I think this would be a delicious ordinance for our governments to consider.)

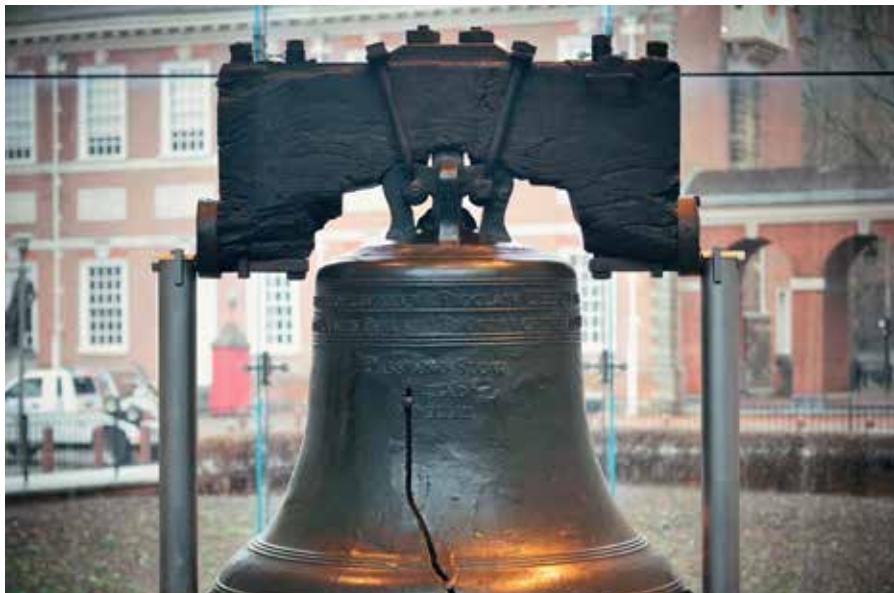
But to get serious—what if the government came for your guns? Please see Mr. Weston’s article “The Bible vs the U.S. Constitution” (*Living Church News*, March–April 2022) for a brief analysis of the Second Amendment.

The Better Part of Liberty

A vital warning about our use of liberty is found in 1 Corinthians 8. This chapter discusses Christians’ eating meat offered to idols. Paul points out that many did not consider it a sin to eat such meat, understanding that “an idol is nothing in the world” (1 Corinthians 8:4). Paul did not dispute their liberty to eat meat offered to idols, but he *was* concerned about brethren who still had “consciousness of the idol”—a mindset Paul classifies as a weak conscience (v. 7). Should the stronger brethren ignore the conscience of weaker brethren (see Romans 15:1)?

Paul’s exhortation is to “beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak” (1 Corinthians 8:9). You may genuinely feel comfortable doing something, but that does not mean that you should flaunt your behavior in front of others. In fact, Paul concludes the chapter by saying that he would never eat meat again if it would keep his brother from stumbling!

I am glad we do not argue about meat sacrificed to idols in this age of God’s Church! I like to eat meat, and Paul clearly explains that I have the liberty to do so! To me, no meal is complete without a meat dish (nor is chili complete without pickles). To the best of my knowledge, my carnivorous ways have never caused a brother to stumble—but what if they did? As much as I love to eat fried chicken, hamburgers, steak, and fried chicken (yes, it deserves to be on the list twice), would I actually follow Paul’s admonition and avoid those foods when



The famous crack in the United States' Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, can serve as a poignant illustration of mankind's fundamentally broken concept of liberty.

around my brother who is weak in the faith? Or would I hide behind "liberty" while my brother stumbles?

Try to apply 1 Corinthians 8 to your own life. Are there things that you have the liberty to do—both biblical *and* secular liberty to do—that are not worth doing because they cause others to stumble? It is difficult to get into specifics about this, as our individual situations will differ in so many details. Even regarding meat offered to idols, Paul was trying to instruct the weak brethren rather than force everyone to give up clean meats forever. Paul shows us how the ministry is supposed to help the brethren understand when they have liberty, when they do not, and how to maintain harmony if we disagree. Those who did not fully understand Paul's teachings on meat were not disfellowshipped, assuming they were not divisive on the issue—he was willing to change his behavior instead of claiming "liberty." Even today, there are some issues in the Church where we need to agree to disagree without diminishing the unity of the Holy Spirit.

A Vital Aspect of Liberty

True liberty only flourishes under the leadership of Jesus Christ. God's law ultimately prohibits some things while requiring us to make our own decisions in other matters. And God, in His word, gives us much counsel to guide us to wise decisions. However, just having knowledge of God's law is not enough—for true liberty to be attained, that law needs to be actively enforced.

When ancient Israel had a weak central government, the tendency was for the Israelites to abuse their liberty, since "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). They had knowledge of God's law, but they failed to enforce

that law, so the people kept falling into idolatry, sexual immorality, and other sins. God punished their sins by allowing foreign nations to oppress them. When times were hard, then the people turned to God and sought His ways of true liberty.

Instead of maintaining a focus on national and individual repentance, the Israelites generally looked for a secular solution—such as a human king who could oversee the nation and lead them in fighting off foreign threats (1 Samuel 8:4–5, 19–20). Samuel tried to warn them that a king would trample on their liberties and burden them with his requirements (vv. 10–18). His warning fell on deaf ears, but it was tragically accurate: Scripture records in 1 and 2 Kings that Israel and Judah were ruled by many more wicked and oppressive kings than righteous kings in their history. Even though they had knowledge of God's law, the kings

were human and could not perfectly deliver the liberty God intended.

You might see where this is going: To have *true* liberty, we must have a perfect King. Only the Son of God, Jesus Christ, can administer God's law of liberty perfectly. While we can today aim to have a foretaste of God's liberty, the need for the warnings that Peter and Paul give about counterfeit liberty is illustrated all around us—and will be until Jesus returns to rule the earth. He will have the power, authority, and love to properly teach and enforce God's laws so that the whole world will experience liberty (Isaiah 11:1–5; 61:1–3).

True Liberty Under God

Liberty is a complicated topic. While the world often presents it as a universal good in all situations, the Bible offers a more nuanced approach. Of course, Mr. Herbert Armstrong would likely simplify the discussion by pointing out that—once again—it's not the thing itself that is always sinful; it may be the wrong use of the thing. When we allow the world to define liberty, its definition leads to the rejection of authority, rejection of law, and worship of self that Peter warned about. Paul also showed that Christians should be willing to value unity more than liberty.

Thankfully, God shows us that He completely understands true liberty! His law is a law of liberty that allows freedom to make personal decisions—and that not only gives us liberty, but also protects us from the consequences of decisions He knows will hurt us. Let's reject this world's counterfeit liberty. Instead, let's focus on how God's way grants us true liberty today—and will bring the whole world true liberty in the Kingdom of God! (N)

The Way of Cain

By John Robinson

As I was growing up in God's Church, the story of Cain and Abel was never of great interest to me. It's a pretty straightforward, very short story about two quarreling brothers—or so many people think. Its climax starts almost immediately and ends just as quickly, and it's easy to read right over it in less than 30 seconds.

But to do so would be a mistake. As you study the story of Cain and Abel in depth, you begin to realize that it isn't a quarrel at all. Rather, it's a powerful lesson told, perhaps surprisingly, through *Cain*, whose grave sin began deep within his heart.

If you dramatically simplified the first two lessons in the Bible, you could say that the story of Adam and Eve is about our relationship with God, while the story of Cain and Abel is about our relationship with our neighbor. One of the first things God does in His word is show us the consequences of breaking the two Great Commandments (Matthew 22:37–39), which summarize the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17). Let's examine what happened between Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 and draw out a few lessons that might not be obvious.

The Source of Hatred

But before we begin to analyze the account in Genesis 4, we need to realize that Cain didn't *suddenly* become murderously angry with Abel. Rather, he allowed the spirit of murder to fester within himself over time, and eventually acted on it. In Leviticus 19, God warns against allowing a resentful attitude to grow inside of us, saying, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD" (vv. 17–18).

Jesus Christ described this hatred in more detail as He gave the Sermon on the Mount. Explaining the Sixth Commandment, Christ said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever

is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:21–22).

With these words, Christ described the logical progression of an increasingly angry, resentful person. The Greek word translated "angry" in "whoever is angry with his brother without a cause" is *orgizō*, which interestingly refers to *lingering* anger, which could also be characterized as *bitterness*. Christ is here referring to harboring resentment toward someone who has done nothing sinful—someone who has simply annoyed us, like a child spilling a drink.

This leads to an attitude in which someone "says to his brother, 'Raca!'" another Greek word, which is tantamount to calling someone brainless, senseless, or accursed—in today's vernacular, an idiot. By this point, anger has been nursed and is becoming strong indeed. The angry person is starting to lose objectivity and control.

In the final step toward the spirit of murder, "whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." The Greek word translated "You fool!" is *mōros*, from which we get the English word *moron*. To cry *mōros* is to call someone morally reprehensible and totally worthless—essentially, it is to say that the person is a waste of God's image. At this point, the angry person has fully embraced the spirit of murder.

The Wrong Kind of Offering

Though it may seem simple, there is profound meaning packed into the beginning of Cain's story in Genesis 4:

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell (vv. 1–5).

We miss a crucial aspect of this story if we do not understand the importance of Abel's righteousness. Hebrews 11:4 tells us, "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks." Since Abel is called "righteous," we know that he obeyed God's commands to the best of his ability, because "all Your commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172).

What are the implications of this truth? Experience has taught me that there are many things that judge us, whether we realize it or not. For example, just a few years ago, I was diligent with my diet and made sure I was exercising, and as a result I was as slim as I had been in years. At the same time, it had also become necessary for me to restock some of my work clothes. In the process of finding new clothing for work, I saw a shirt that was very inexpensive for the quality of the garment. It was in my size, but it was an athletic, slim-fit style of shirt. I ordered it, and when it arrived, I tried it on with a little trepidation. Thankfully, the shirt fit, but it fit a little too well. I knew in an instant that while I could fit into the shirt right now, even a small gain in weight would change that.

The weeks went by and I became less disciplined about my diet and my exercise. I was pretty sure I'd gained a little weight, but how much? The day came when I was cycling through the shirts in my closet and, as it was nearing the time to do laundry, I was not finding a suitable shirt for work. But there it was, the shirt, hanging there, looking at me, *mocking* me. Why? Because either the shirt fit me or it didn't! It was the same size it had been weeks earlier when I'd ordered it, and it had the same dimensions that I had personally specified. It wasn't the shirt's fault—it was the same judge now that it had been when I'd bought it. Months passed, and I didn't even like going into my closet anymore—because of that shirt.

More time passed, and one day I decided that the best thing to do would be to remove the shirt from my presence—remove its smug, unchanging, same-as-they-ever-were shirt dimensions. With that shirt no longer in the closet, I would be free to enter it without the constant reminder of how I didn't measure up anymore.

Similarly, Cain's hatred for Abel was not motivated by any sinful attitude or action on Abel's part—not like Esau's hatred for Jacob, for example. Instead, Cain's attitude was the most toxic kind; the primary thing that infuriated Cain was simply that Abel was righteous (1 John 3:12). That righteousness was, to put it in modern terms, really annoying to Cain, because it made him "look bad" and, by comparison, pointed out his guilt.

Abel brought what was essentially a sin offering, a firstling of the flock. He brought the best of his possessions, and his offering mirrored his attitude of reverence toward God. Cain, by contrast, appears to *not* have brought his best—and

God takes offense at substandard offerings, as Malachi makes clear: "You offer defiled food on My altar, but say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible.' ... While this is being done by your hands, *will He accept you favorably?*" (Malachi 1:7, 9). God accepted Abel's offering for the same reason He did *not* accept Cain's, and that reason was *attitude*.

The words "accept you" in Malachi 1:9 are translated from an interesting Hebrew idiom that literally reads, "lift up your face." This lends an interesting detail to the story of Cain, whose face—his "countenance"—*fell* when his offering was not accepted. A more literal translation than "Cain was very angry" would read "it was hot to Cain," a Hebrew idiom revealing that Cain *burned* with anger, to the point that it affected his body language.

In response, God gave Cain sound advice: "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted [lifted up]? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Genesis 4:6–7). The *New English Translation* comments that "sin is portrayed with animal imagery here as a beast crouching and ready to pounce." This was not condemnation of Cain. Rather, it was meant as both a warning and an encouragement: God was telling Cain that he could still choose to change his heart, and that he needed to do so before the crouching beast of sin overcame him completely.

How should Cain have changed his heart? We find the answer in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus, who had been the God of the Old Testament, said that "if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23–24). Cain came to present an offering to God *while harboring ill-will toward his brother*. We cannot expect God to be pleased with our service to Him if we are bitter and resentful toward those made in His image.

The Result of Bitterness

Two things resulted from God not accepting Cain's offering: Anger at God and anger at Abel. Again, we see that Cain had no rational reason to be angry with Abel—after all, Abel wasn't the one who had rejected Cain's offering. But Abel's righteous example served as a *judge* to Cain, who became consumed with bitterness and decided to kill his brother—by extension, ending the ideal behavior that he exemplified. "Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him" (Genesis 4:8).

God, of course, already knew that Cain had murdered his brother, but because He wanted to see how Cain would respond, He gave him an opportunity to confess his sin:

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.” And Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear! Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me.” And the LORD said to him, “Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden (Genesis 4:9–16).

As we see, Cain had now become filled with bitterness and resentment not only toward his brother, but toward God’s entire way of life. This type of attitude, when fully developed, characterizes a person who is driven by a murderous heart

As a murderer, Cain was worthy of death himself, so why didn’t God simply execute him? In allowing Cain to live, God has shown us the consequences of Cain’s way of life.

and is “of the wicked one” (1 John 3:12). Not only did Cain despise his righteous brother in his heart, not only did he embrace the spirit of murder and even act upon it, but, to make matters worse, he was unwilling to acknowledge any of his own guilt—in fact, his sinful mindset deluded him into thinking that God was being unfair and that he, *Cain*, was a victim, even while the blood of the *real* victim was still on the ground!

Thus, a bitter, angry, and sulking Cain left the presence of God to start his own civilization. How this civilization developed is recorded in the rest of Genesis 4. Eventually, the result was that “the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). We know that, ultimately, God had no choice but to destroy most of mankind in a great flood—such was the legacy of Cain.

As a murderer, Cain was worthy of death himself, so why didn’t God simply execute him? We might consider that, by allowing Cain to live, God has given us an illustration of the consequences of Cain’s way of life. Cain’s children went on to imitate his violence, because “a little leaven leavens the whole

lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6). Righteousness takes effort, but sin spreads like a disease; in Cain’s line, God has left an example of the results of letting that disease spread. Adam and Eve had chosen a mix of good and evil, and Cain’s sin would have shown them—as it shows us—that when evil is allowed to exist, it isn’t long before it stamps out what is good. Sin cannot be tolerated.

But Cain’s sinful influence did not end with the Noachian Flood. Thousands of years later, the Apostle Jude wrote to remind the Church of examples and admonitions recorded in the Scriptures, referencing the rebellious angels, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, those who reject authority and are critical of leaders, and presumptuous people who have corrupted themselves with an errant way of life. Describing such practitioners of sin, Jude wrote that “they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah” (Jude 11).

There is a reason God inspired the story of Cain to be the first one we read after the record of the creation and the sin of Adam and Eve. It is not the way of Abel, or even the way of Adam’s third son, Seth, that has characterized human civilization—it is, tragically, the way of Cain.

What About Us?

The Apostle John was inspired to write that “in this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest:

Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:10–12).

The way of Cain is to blame others for our problems, stubbornly refusing to accept that the common denominator in all those problems is *us*. When we see someone behaving more righteously than we are, do we resent them and feel judged? Or do we see ourselves honestly and appreciate the opportunity to change and grow?

Cain never stopped to consider that *he* was the problem—that the true source of his anger and bitterness was his own unrighteousness. When we obey God’s command to love our neighbors as ourselves, praying for those who irritate us and doing good to those by whom we feel mistreated, it keeps us in a positive attitude and prevents us from going down the road to anger, hate, and bitterness. We can only change ourselves, and when we strive with God’s help to esteem others as better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3) and eliminate our own resentment, every relationship we have will reap the benefits. (LN)

LCG HQ Welcomes New Employees!

By **Editorial Staff**

As our Presiding Evangelist, Mr. Gerald Weston, has mentioned many times, God sent blessings upon His Church even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, propelling the Work forward while much of the world screeched to a halt. Those blessings included not only an increase in funds, but also an increase in labor made possible by the extra income! Since the beginning of 2020, the Living Church of God's World Headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina, has welcomed several new employees, who each bring fresh perspective and talents to the Work of God. We were delighted to have the opportunity to talk with seven of the newest Headquarters hires, and we thought you might like to learn a little about their experience working for God's Church.

Church Administration and Media Operations

Having borne the responsibilities of **Executive Administrative Assistant** since March of 2021, **Mr. Tyler Wayne** brings



greatly appreciated help to the Church Administration Department, especially when it comes to the Feast of Tabernacles. Of his two primary duties, the first involves assisting

ing Mr. Rod McNair in managing the Festival Office—overseeing registration and assisting with Festival contracts and the Festival workflow schedule. He also maintains contact with Festival site coordinators to keep everyone on the same page. “When there’s a deadline, I kind of shepherd the process,” he said. “If it’s related to the Feast, I have a hand in it.”

That’s no small task—but it’s not Mr. Wayne’s only duty. He also helps manage *Tomorrow’s World* Presentations. “I handle a lot of the scheduling for those presentations,” he said, “and I shepherd the processing of the documents involved. I handle some of the interface between the pastors and answer some of the questions that they have regarding the TWPs.” There is also data crunching to be done regarding these Presentations. “We track a bunch of the data for TWPs,” Mr. Wayne said, “trying to figure out what works and what doesn’t work, where we should have a TWP based on an area’s subscriber count, the last time we had a TWP there, the responses we normally get in that area, how they would relate to nearby congregations—things like that.”

“When I started, the goal of my position was to get things off Mr. DeSimone’s plate,” said **Mr. Dalton Mooney, Digital**

Media Assistant for the Broadcast Media Department for the past two years. “I quickly became focused on ads.” A Living Education alumnus, Mr. Mooney works with Mrs. Rachel



Keesee to create *Tomorrow’s World* ads that go on most of the social media where God’s Work has a presence. Together, they handle social media ads for North America, much of Europe, and various other nations. They’re also responsible for creating ads in French, Dutch, German, Spanish, and Afrikaans. “Another part of what I do is Google

ads,” Mr. Mooney said. “So, when you search for something with Google and there’s an ad for *Tomorrow’s World* at the top, that’s also something we do.” Part of this involves search engine optimization—making sure that *Tomorrow’s World* material contains specific words or phrases that will make it easily located with common Internet search terms.

“I play with pretty colors all day,” joked **Mr. Benjamin Graham, Graphic Designer** for the Editorial Department since January of 2021. Getting a little more specific, he added that as he develops designs for LCG and *Tomorrow’s World*



materials, he greatly appreciates the opportunity to work creatively on a wide variety of projects, such as covers for *Tomorrow’s World* magazine and invitations for *Tomorrow’s*

World Presentations. Mr. Graham also designed Living Education’s current logo, and created the full-page infographics used in recent issues of *Tomorrow’s World* magazine. “The other side of that coin is website-related design,” he said, “which is really my primary background, what I’ve done for a long time.”

Business Operations

Mr. Nathan Morgan, Mail Clerk for the past two years, described the diverse tasks the Mail Processing Department accomplishes, such as mailing invitations for *Tomorrow’s World* Presentations, mailing coworker letters, and entering information in the Church’s ever-growing database. Also a Living Education alumnus, Mr. Morgan’s further duties involve helping to mail items that serve the needs of different



congregations, such as Church publications for congregational libraries and information desks, supplies for the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, etc. “I like handling the mail processing machinery,” Mr. Morgan said. “There’s always something new to learn about it, learning how to fix this and fix that.”

Ms. Amanda Casey has served the Accounting Department since December of 2020 as its **Senior Accountant**, overseeing the processing of donations and accounts payable. In her words, this involves “making sure that the controls we’ve put in place over donation processing are working, that donations are being allocated to the correct accounts, and that they’re being tracked to the donor’s record.” This is done so that, at the end of the fiscal year, all donors receive accurate tax receipts and can therefore claim the appropriate deductions on their tax returns.

Working with Ms. Casey in the Accounting Department is **Mrs. Rylyn Baca, Accounts Payable Clerk** for the past



year. A Living Education alumna, the bulk of Mrs. Baca’s duties involve invoice processing, which entails making sure that all invoices are labeled correctly and contain no misinformation of any kind. “The second-biggest part of what I do is helping to print checks,” she said, “and there’s a whole bunch of people involved in that process, because everything we do is double-checked.”

Ms. Meredith Hedges, Record Specialist, who has worked in the Records & Information Services Department for roughly a year, is another Living Education alumna with a background in customer service. Her

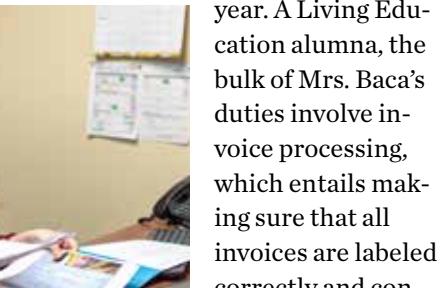
duties involve keeping the Church’s database up to date so that we can better serve our members and subscribers. While she acknowledged that the work in RIS can seem a little mundane at first glance, she appreciates the upbeat, encouraging attitudes of her coworkers and supervisors—together, she said, they “make it fun.”

Comparing and Contrasting

Mr. Wayne’s role in Church Administration provides a stark contrast to his previous work in the construction field. “I worked demolition before this,” he said, “and it’s an interesting contrast, to be in an office environment as opposed to being in a field environment. Working at HQ has been a really good experience.” Mr. Wayne has appreciated the opportunity to observe how the executives in God’s Church interact with business contacts in the world, and he tries to “soak up” as much as he can. “Church Administration interfaces with the world in a way that some departments don’t,” he said, “because we’re dealing with hotels, contracts, and things like that. So, when certain issues arise, it’s really interesting to see how Mr. Rod McNair handles it, or how other pastors handle it. It’s been a fun experience.”

“I worked with every kind of person under the sun when I worked at Qdoba,” said Mr. Mooney, who described the difficulties of working where he heard perverse language on a nearly constant basis—a sharp contrast to working with the people of God. He remarked positively on the efficiency and camaraderie of Headquarters, describing it as “a high-functioning office space with a lot of moving parts. We have a very close-knit group over here. Everyone knows everyone and everyone gets along.” Of course, there are other perks to leaving the food service industry. “I also haven’t burned my fingers on anything—that’s been pretty nice,” he said, smiling. “Less free food, though.”

Mr. Graham previously worked in the corporate world and spent six years designing and gathering data for a bank. When asked how the Headquarters environment differed from that of his prior positions, he mused that “they’re definitely two different worlds. I think with more of a corporate environment there are way more processes, way more boxes to check off. It’s a lot of people, a lot of gears in the machine. Contrast that with working at Headquarters—I’d say we are a much smaller shop, much more bare-bones, but I think a huge advantage to that is a freedom to explore.” Mr. Graham related how his previous employment often involved spending multiple months on a single design project. Working at Headquarters offers him an enjoyable change of pace, with multiple projects to which he can apply himself creatively. “Being a designer, working for smaller companies is always preferable by its very nature,” he said. “You want to be able to work on a bunch of different things. If I’m working on a website for a while, it’s nice to switch gears and design a magazine cover. I’m really happy I’m able to do that.”



Mr. Morgan's prior job experience prepared him for his current role in unexpected ways. "I worked at H&M, a clothing store," he said, "with a lot of warehouse duties like stocking, taking inventory, folding, putting things away, and organizing, which is kind of what we do in MPD—there are different sections for different booklets, and you sleeve things away, put them into envelopes." Mr. Morgan also worked at an accounting firm, which he says prepared him for the email correspondence he now finds himself maintaining. "I like to think that sending emails in my accounting job kind of prepared me, in a way, to try to send emails nicely when I send them in MPD—make sure they are worded correctly, make sure I'm communicating what I'm saying properly so the other person understands," he said.

Ms. Casey, who previously worked in the audit department of the public accounting firm Eide Bailly, described the work environment at Headquarters as one of both diligence and understanding. "We work really hard to get done what needs to be done, and there's always more to work on—but, for example, I'm studying to become a Certified Public Accountant, and last week I had one of my tests, and I had time to take that, which was really great. So, it's nice to have that little bit of flexibility there, and everybody's very understanding and willing to work together." Ms. Hodges concurred, saying that "having cheerful and lighthearted people to work with makes the repetitive nature of the job feel much more exciting and fun, as well as having a purpose to what I'm doing and knowing it's benefiting God's Work."

Reflecting on the job she held in food service before being employed by the Church, Mrs. Baca joked that, "here, I have a lot less people coming up to me and asking if our ice cream machine is working." On a more serious note, Mrs. Baca related that when she began working at Headquarters, she be-

came part of "a well-oiled machine," very unlike where she'd worked before, where "employees would disappear for a while or take as long as they possibly could to do something. The mentality of making the job easier for the next person was not there. The biggest help to my mindset is knowing that I want to make sure I'm making the next person's job easier."

A Priceless Experience

As God's Work continues to move forward, we are deeply thankful that He has blessed Headquarters with diligent employees young and old. Anyone who has been to Headquarters knows that God does a truly miraculous amount through what is, by all accounts, a very small team. While we are thrilled to welcome and work with new members of that team, the best part is always knowing that God gets His Work done by His power, and that the entire team includes all of His people around the world, each contributing his or her prayers, good example, and resources as they are able. God chooses whom He calls and works through, and supports all of us through His Spirit, training us for responsibilities in the future that we cannot now imagine.

Of course, these are not the only new employees God's Church has been blessed with recently—we hope to introduce you to others in a future issue of the *Living Church News*, and we hope that many more will have this small foretaste of the work environment God will soon bring to all the world. "The nature of the relationship is inherently different," Mr. Graham added, "because you're working with God's people. In the corporate environment, there were still some great times and there were people I loved to work with, but to work with God's people and not have to worry about being confronted over the Holy Days, the Sabbath, or things of that nature—I don't think you can put a price on that." (LN)



From left to right: Ms. Gabrielle McNair, Mr. Charles Austin, Ms. Kezia Ciesielka, Mr. Nathan Kroon, Ms. Gabrielle Burson, Mr. Kevin Bibb, Ms. Destiny Stroud, Mr. Ryan Price, Mr. Caanin Fausone, and Ms. Yolanda Watt.

Living Education—Charlotte's Fourth Graduation

Friday, May 27, 2022, saw the fourth annual Living Education—Charlotte graduation ceremony. The Women's Club building in Waxhaw, North Carolina, was filled with the students' families and friends, and the enthusiasm of the graduates and those who had come to support them was tangible. One by one, each student was given a Certificate in Biblical Foundations, framed and ready for exhibition on workplace walls or living-room mantels. Everyone in attendance agreed that, truly, "a desire accomplished is sweet to the soul" (Proverbs 13:19).

Mr. Weston informed all of those in attendance that a tree would be planted outside Sheryl Manor, the Living Education—Charlotte women's dorm, in remembrance of Mrs. Christy McNair, who finished her race on May 27, 2021. A plaque would accompany the tree, to honor Mrs. McNair's shining example of Christian womanhood and service.

Living Education—Charlotte's fourth academic year having concluded, the students prepared to step back into the world, thankful for their training in becoming more fruitful ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

—Editorial Staff

Young People: God Is Working With You!

Repentance, conversion, and baptism aren't just for first-generation Christians!

By **Rod McNair**

Conversion is often a confusing topic for young people who grow up in the Church. Baptism can seem like an overwhelming commitment, and one that only applies to parents, somehow unnecessary for a person who has been in the Church since infancy. It can even seem like a deterrent to "having fun" and "experiencing life." Each of these perceptions can hinder a young person from taking these first steps toward the Kingdom of God. But this need not be the case.

Committing Fully to God Can Seem Scary

You may have read in the Bible that true Christians will be persecuted for their faith—some even physically (Matthew 10:22). True Christians might even have to turn their backs on family members to follow Christ (Matthew 10:37). On top of that, young people are approaching some of the biggest decisions of their lives. Career and marriage, college or learning a trade—commitments cannot get much bigger than that! A big commitment like baptism can be scary, and just considering it can frighten a person into doing nothing.

But God does not want young people to be overwhelmed by fear of commitment. He wants to give "power... love... a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7), which come through His Spirit (v. 6). Even before they are baptized, children of Christian parents can have access to that power. Upon baptism and conversion, God's Spirit will be even more powerful in your life, because it will be *in you*, but even before conversion, God can use it to work *with you* (John 14:17). God says fear causes torment, but "love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Face your fears—and your decisions. Ask God to help you make those decisions through His Spirit. Think of the conversion process as learning to exercise that Spirit, as you begin to develop a personal relationship with your loving Father in heaven.

God wants you to look to Him as your provider and counselor. He wants you to see Him as your protector, ready to come to your aid when you need Him and call out for Him. Consider how King David described his relationship with God:

In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears.... He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind.... He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support (Psalm 18:6–18).

God is a powerful and caring ally to have on your side! So, don't be scared—God wants to "establish, strengthen, and settle you" (1 Peter 5:10). Even if your baptism may yet be a few years off, beginning a relationship with Him right now will start to give you the courage to face adult issues and adult decisions. It is exactly what young people need right now—and in the years just ahead.

The Promise Is to You, Too!

Some youth in the Church have the misconception that baptism and conversion is only some sort of future concern. Of course, baptism is not for children, and that is why God's Church does not teach "infant baptism." Young people should wait to be baptized until they are mature enough to make this lifetime commitment. Baptism requires deep repentance and a commitment to lifelong obedience—both of which are adult decisions. However, that does not mean a young person cannot be *thinking* about baptism and *preparing* for it by developing a relationship with God.

There are examples in the Bible of second- and even third-generation Christians. Timothy was reared in the Church by his mother and grandmother, both of whom were solid, faithful Christians. "I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Timothy 1:5). Paul encouraged Timothy to "continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that *from childhood* you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are

able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14–15).

Timothy did not consider being raised in the Church a handicap. He considered it an asset. He did not have to “unlearn” all the things that first-generation Christians had to. He just had to recall and retain what he had learned, which made him “wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

So do not fall into the trap of thinking that committing your life to God is just something for your parents. It is for *you*. God inspired Peter to speak directly about believers’ children in his famous Pentecost sermon: “For the promise [of the Holy Spirit] is *to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off*, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). I urge you to claim that promise—it is not just for parents, but for you as well. And your future baptism and conversion is something to look forward to.

“Shouldn’t I Expect Something Dramatic?”

We may fall into a “road to Damascus” mindset, thinking that anything less than God striking us down with blindness and a bright light (Acts 9:3–6) is just not a real “beginning” with Him. Are you waiting for that to happen? Your parents may have stories about how, when they were called, a “light turned

We may fall into a “road to Damascus” mindset, thinking that anything less than God striking us down with a bright light is just not a real “beginning” with Him. Are you waiting for that to happen?

on” in their mind. Or “suddenly it all made sense,” and they “for the first time understood what they were reading.”

But most young people in the Church have been sitting in services for years, listening, learning, and hearing God’s word expounded—and it probably *already* makes a great deal of sense. God probably does not need to use a dramatic miracle like lightning from heaven to open your mind. Through your parents’ conversion, God is already working with you in a special way (1 Corinthians 7:14). And through that “sanctification,” you already have access to God and His Spirit, and probably already understand His laws and His truth to a certain extent.

So do not expect a bright light from heaven—that most likely will *not* happen. Consider these verses describing how God often works: “The LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11–12).

In that instance, God chose to speak to Elijah not through awesome miracles, but with a “still small voice.” Are you listening for that voice? Your youth is a wonderful time to learn to do so.

“I Don’t Want to Miss Out”

Some have the misconception that if they commit to seeking God in their youth, they will miss out on “experiencing life.” This is essentially saying, “All those traumatic experiences that my elders got to experience (and repent of)—why can’t I experience them, too?”

That line of reasoning shows a very dangerous mindset. In most congregations, there are adults—*who were reared in the Church*—who could tell you stories of why they *wish they had listened* instead of “going out and having their fun.” Many have had to repent of life-altering mistakes.

Are you really missing out on fun by developing a relationship with God now? God does not look at it that way. Notice what He says:

How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?
For scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge.... Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded... because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies. For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; *but whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil* (Proverbs 1:22–33).

Choosing to neglect God’s instruction is not “more fun,” even though it might appear to be in the short run.

When you understand something you hear in a sermon or something you read in your personal Bible studies, *respond* to it. God’s working with you is *real* and not just for your parents. The only thing to fear is *not having a relationship with God*, because a life without God’s help is ultimately a life of pain, suffering, sorrow, and disappointment.

Jesus said, “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). He also said, “Take My yoke upon you... for My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:29–30). Develop a relationship with God. Ask Him to guide your growth and to grant you true repentance. Think about God’s promises and the opportunity He is holding out to you. It’s not just for your parents. That opportunity is *yours*. (LN)

In Loving Memory

Mrs. Helene Bartkowiak, 81, died on February 26. She will be missed by all who knew her, certainly including the Paris congregation in France.

Mr. Arthur Belliveau, 98, died on April 24. He was a member of the Moncton, New Brunswick, congregation in Canada, although for the last several years he was not able to attend services because of his declining health. Mr. Belliveau was a longtime member who loved the truth and loved being together with the brethren.

Mrs. Dorothy Lorraine Galinat, 82, died on February 14 in Austell, Georgia, where she had lived since 1985. She and her husband Melvyn were married for 47 years before his death in 2013. They were faithful members in God's Church, baptized in the early 1970s. Mrs. Galinat was a devoted mother, spending many years as a homemaker. She loved to work in her yard, planting flowers and gardening. She enjoyed watching sports, especially football, and she was an avid Pittsburgh Steelers fan! Each week she brought homemade cakes and other delicious desserts for snacks after services. Mrs. Galinat is survived by three children, six grandchildren, an older brother, and a younger sister. Besides her family, she is greatly missed by the brethren in the Atlanta, Georgia, congregation, where she attended as long as her health allowed.

Mr. Thomas R. Garrett, 84, finished his race on March 2, surrounded by his family. Baptized in 1973 and ordained a deacon in 1982, Mr. Garrett faithfully served brethren in New York, in Florida, and finally in North Carolina as a member of the Charlotte congregation. Before being called into God's Church, Mr. Garrett was an avionics technician in the United States Air Force, and later ran his own avionics repair facility as a civilian. Mr. Garrett was predeceased by his daughter, Janice White, and is survived by his wife of more than 61 years, Lena, as well as by four sons, fourteen grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Mr. Garrett's legacy of love toward God and his fellow man will be treasured by all who knew him.

Mrs. Doris Grandberry, 67, died on November 14. Mrs. Grandberry was a longtime member, baptized in 1986, and a much-loved part of the Memphis, Tennessee, congregation. In 2012 she retired after a 34-year career in banking. She was a joy to be around and will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved her.

Mr. Danny Gurski, 69, died peacefully on February 28 after a courageous battle with cancer. Mr. Gurski grew up on a

family farm near Swan Plain and after high school attended the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, becoming a Red Seal automotive mechanic. His excellent skills were on demand by farmers and others who knew that he could fix or "MacGyver" automotive, farm, and heavy equipment in the field to keep them going. His true passion was farming, and he purchased his farm in 1982. He was innovative and creative in his approach to farming and he had a passion for his animals. The farm was, without a doubt, his favorite place to be. He also enjoyed attending dances and the Craven Jamboree, fishing, traveling, and socializing with friends and family. Mr. Gurski is survived by one brother, one sister, three children, and nine grandchildren, and also mourned by the Yorkton, Saskatchewan, congregation.

Mr. James (Jim) Hay, 88, died on March 31. Baptized in 1968, he was a longtime member of God's Church, and he lived an interesting and very full life. The second child of nine, Mr. Hay grew up with lots of love and lots of chores on a farm in Manitoba. As he got older, he contributed to the family income and, over his lifetime, worked at a variety of jobs. He also started his own successful business, learned to fly and bought an airplane, and in retirement, he built a plane himself. He had a daughter and a son with his first wife, and after her death, he married a lifelong friend, Louise. Their home was filled with love, laughter, and their blended families. Mr. Hay was an avid fisherman, hunter, and gardener. In his later years, he used a motorized trike to reach his many garden patches in the city. He and his wife canned and froze all their vegetables and shared them with family, the brethren, and their neighbors. Mr. Hay is survived by his wife Louise, also a longtime member of the Regina, Saskatchewan, congregation, as well as by his son, five chosen children, and numerous beloved grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Mr. Stan Jennings, 88, died on March 2. He was baptized in 1962 and served faithfully as a deacon for many years. He is survived by his wife Joan and other relatives. He was part of the Hook congregation in England.

Mr. James Jones, Jr., 83, died January 10. Mr. Jones was a member of the Atlanta, Georgia, congregation. Although he was unable to attend services in person due to health concerns, he was always ready for a hearty phone conversation about the Bible and the Work. Mr. Jones served in the U.S. military from 1961 to 1963. Although he worked in the construction industry, he was an entrepreneur at heart, operating a small neighborhood convenience store for many years.

Mr. Jones is survived by seven children, as well as by grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and a host of other relatives. He was happy to be a member of God's Church (baptized in 1973) and looked forward to the coming Kingdom of God.

Mr. Curtis Lambright, 70, died on May 22. Baptized in 1971, he was a longtime elder in South Louisiana, serving congregations in Ferriday, Lafayette, and Baton Rouge. Mr. Lambright was a second-generation Christian, strong, and faithful. He retired from his position as a Maintenance Supervisor for the Louisiana Department of Corrections after 28 years of service. Mr. Lambright is survived by his wife of 44 years, Ethel; sons James and Brad and daughter Tiffany; grandchildren; and two sisters, as well as nieces and nephews. Mr. Lambright was a loved and faithful servant and minister, and he will be sorely missed by many besides his family.

Mrs. Corynne Martin, 86, of the Moncton, New Brunswick, congregation, died suddenly on March 27. A member of God's Church since 1972, she was dedicated to her family and serving her Church brethren. Trained as a nurse, she was ever active, a born helper, and a great cook. Mrs. Martin loved being around people and was always willing to help anyone. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her. She is survived by four children, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. A private burial was held, and a memorial will be held in the summer to gather family, friends, and stories to remember a wonderful lady.

Mr. Joseph L. Meche, 80, died on April 29. Mr. Meche was a longtime member of the Lafayette, Louisiana, congregation. Baptized into God's Church in 1969, he attended services in Lake Charles, one hour away from his home, transported in a portable iron lung by his caregiver. He was a dedicated member of the Church of God, and participated in the Lafayette congregation as much as he could as his health allowed and technology improved his mobility. He is survived by a sister and a son.

Mrs. Barbara Ann Moluf, 67, a longtime member of God's Church, died in her sleep on April 15, after several years with Alzheimer's disease. Mrs. Moluf started attending the Worldwide Church of God with her family in South Dakota when she was eleven years old. In 1973, she entered Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas, where she met her future husband, Larry Moluf. They were married in 1975 and settled in the Kansas City area, where the first four of their seven children were born. The Moluf family moved to Lawrence, Kansas, in 1983, and Mrs. Moluf began taking classes at the University of Kansas. She graduated in 1990 with a bachelor's degree in math education, by then a mother of six. She taught high school math for 15 years in Kansas—taking a five-year break to rear their seventh child—before retiring from teaching in 2010. Mr. and Mrs. Moluf returned to the Kansas City area for several years, then moved to the Houston area in 2019 after her health began to decline. Mrs. Moluf is survived by her husband of 46 years, Larry; seven children: Marshall (Nadia) Moluf, Peder (Melisa)

Moluf, Rachel (Michael) Keesee, Lanna (Ryan) Livingston, David (Ashley) Moluf, Laura (Brett) Matzuka, and Kevin (Tatiana) Moluf; twelve grandchildren; and four siblings.

Mrs. Mary Orlansky, 79, born on January 12, 1943, died on Sunday, April 3, at her home. She was the mother of seven children, and she had five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Mrs. Orlansky was a member of God's Church for 53 years, having been baptized in 1969. She attended services with the Jackson, Mississippi, congregation, as often as her health would allow. She loved discussing God's word and to be a part of the Work of God! She will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

Mrs. Jean E. Peterson, 89, died on March 14. She was born in Missouri in 1932 and moved to Quincy, Illinois, following her marriage to Ronald G. Peterson in 1951. She was baptized into the body of Christ in 1965. In 1968, the family moved to Sarasota, Florida, and two years later to Lakeland, Florida, where she resided until her death. She and her husband, an elder, were active members of God's Church, most recently in the Tampa congregation. Mrs. Peterson enjoyed hobbies of genealogy, sewing, singing in the church choir, gardening, and playing canasta. For many years she worked alongside her husband as the accountant for the family business. She put much of her energy into her children and grandchildren, encouraging their education and talent development. Mrs. Peterson was a faithful woman who loved God, her family, and her church community. Her example of kindness, patience, and forgiveness has left an enduring effect on all those who knew her. She was preceded in death by her husband, Ronald G. Peterson, as well as one son, Reginald Peterson. She is survived by four daughters: Rhonda (Ray) Clore, Robin (Tony) Morelli, Teresa (Jim) Westwood, and Brenda Wendling; two sons: Rick (Lois) Peterson and Jeff (Charlene) Peterson; one brother; 17 grandchildren; and 14 great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Fostine Swain, 93, died peacefully in her sleep on March 22, following complications from a car accident. Baptized in 1970, Mrs. Swain was a beloved pillar in the Fayetteville, North Carolina, congregation. She faithfully made it to Sabbath services and was able to live by herself in her own home until just a few months before her death. She was passionate for God's way of life, and with her excellent memory recalled details from sermons she had heard through the decades. One of her greatest joys was discussing God's truth with brethren. Mrs. Swain collected nearly every biblical resource and Church publication she could acquire, and she was a great mentor, readily and accurately answering questions the brethren asked. She continued to share her life's stories and quote Scripture almost to the very end of her life, always remaining confident in God's promises and in the hope of the resurrection. She frequently expressed her love and concern for the brethren and her love and support for the ministry. She will be greatly missed by her family, the brethren, her neighbors, and

her friends. Mrs. Swain was preceded in death by her husband and her brother. She leaves behind her daughter, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Mr. Gerard Tremblay, 72, of the Halifax, Nova Scotia, congregation in Canada, died peacefully on February 11, surrounded by family. A member of God's Church since 1990, he was a pillar of his community, volunteering and always happy to help others. He had a love of nature and brought passion, joy, love, and humor to all aspects of his life. He is survived by his wife Jocelyne, two daughters, and one son-in-law, as well as by extended family and friends.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert White of the Kansas City, Missouri, congregation, were baptized together on June 1, 1974, and died three days apart. Mr. "Bob" White was **81** when he died on August 7, 2021, and Mrs. Linda Kaye White was **78** when she died on August 10. They were married in 1962. Mr. White worked as a computer technician for Unisys before he retired, and Mrs. White was a computer software specialist in the IT industry before she retired. Mr. and Mrs. White had four children: Steve (Cecilia), Chris (Amy), Rebecca, and Jahnelle Seaman (Jay), as well as eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild. They are also mourned by relatives, friends, and brethren.

ORDINATIONS

Mr. John Baust was ordained a deacon on April 16 by area pastor Joseph Brown and elder Gilbert Baust. Mr. John Baust serves in the Ocala, Florida, congregation.

Mr. Franz Boehm was ordained an elder on March 26 by area pastor Bill Long and elder Malcolm Murray. He serves in the Traverse City, Michigan, congregation.

Mr. Dennis Collins was ordained a deacon on April 16 by assistant pastor Ryan Dawson and elder Wallace Hay. Mr. Collins serves in the Deltona, Florida, congregation.

Mr. James Dawson was ordained an elder on April 16 by area pastor Joseph Brown, pastor Dexter Wakefield, and assistant pastor Ryan Dawson. Mr. Dawson serves in the Lake City, Florida, congregation.

Mr. Curtis Drewniak was ordained a deacon on April 16 by area pastor Yancy Taber. Mr. Drewniak serves in the La Porte, Indiana, congregation.

Mr. David Fogg was ordained an elder on April 16 by area pastor Joseph Brown, pastor Dexter Wakefield, assistant pastor Ryan Dawson, and elder James Dawson. Mr. Fogg serves in the Jacksonville, Florida, congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. R.A. (Katie) Greene were ordained deacon and deaconess on April 16 by area pastor Joseph Brown. Mr. and Mrs. Greene serve in the Lake City, Florida, congregation.

Mr. James Warren Kirk was ordained a deacon on April 16 by area pastor Joseph Brown. Mr. Kirk serves in the Coolidge, Georgia, congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Matt (Anne) Lucas were ordained deacon and deaconess on April 16 by area pastor Joseph Brown, pastor Dexter Wakefield, assistant pastor Ryan Dawson, and elders Wallace Hay, Jack Lucas, James Dawson, and David Fogg. Mr. and Mrs. Matt Lucas serve in the Jacksonville, Florida, congregation.

Ms. Michelle McCoggle and **Mrs. Karla Mincey** were ordained deacon-

esses on April 16 by pastor Dexter Wakefield and elder Jack Lucas. Ms. McCoggle and Mrs. Mincey serve in the Coolidge, Georgia, congregation.

Mr. Ronald Moses was ordained a deacon on September 7 by area pastor Rajan Moses. Mr. Ronald Moses serves in the Kuala Lumpur congregation as well as in the Malaysian Church Office, assisting Mr. Rajan Moses.

Mr. Robert Stephens was ordained an elder on April 23 by area pastor James Sweat, pastor Dexter Wakefield, assistant pastor Ryan Dawson, and elders Richard Thomas and James Dawson. Mr. Stephens serves the brethren in Fort Lauderdale and neighboring congregations in Florida.

Mr. Glynn Stringer was ordained a deacon on March 19 by area pastor Ed Breaux and elder Rob Coates. Mr. Stringer serves in the Pensacola, Florida, and Ocean Springs, Mississippi, congregations.

Births

Mr. and Mrs. Dueal (Lelieka) Allen are happy to announce the birth of their daughter **Adalia Bethany Allen**. Adalia was born March 9 weighing 8.1 pounds and measuring 21 inches long. The Allen family attends the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Chris (Rebecca) Reimer of the Winnipeg, Manitoba, congregation in Canada, had their first child, **Colton Barrett Reimer**, on Wednesday, May 4. Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Reimer on the birth of their first child!

Weddings & Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Greg (Mitzy) All celebrated their **50th wedding anniversary** on January 14. The Walterboro, South Carolina, congregation presented them with a lovely gift in honor of this milestone. Mr. and Mrs. All are a very giving couple and serve as a wonderful example to all who know them. They are also well known for their arts and crafts at the Feast of Tabernacles. We all wish them many more.

Mr. and Mrs. Ken (Marlene) Eddins recently celebrated the **50th anniversary** of their wedding, which took place in Canada on May 6, 1972. Mr. and Mrs. Eddins began attending the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation in 2013, and were baptized on March 12, 2015 and November 9, 2017, respectively. They have been blessed with two daughters, Traci and Shawna, as well as with four grandchildren. Mr. and Mrs. Eddins celebrated their anniversary with a family dinner and a trip to Nashville, Tennessee. Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Eddins on this wonderful milestone!

Longtime members **Mr. and Mrs. Bob (Ann) Galle** reached their milestone **50th wedding anniversary** on May 27. The Appleton, Wisconsin, congregation honored them after Sabbath services on May 28, with local and visiting members enjoying an open dish meal together and sharing in the beautiful anniversary cake. A collage of wedding photos and fresh flowers decorated the table, and everybody present expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the special couple. Mr. and Mrs. Galle started attending God's Church in 1972 and were baptized in January 1973. He served on the sound crew and they both coordinated the church library. Mr. Galle has served the Appleton congregation as a deacon since 2010.

Mr. and Mrs. Rick (Karen) George celebrated their **50th wedding anniversary** on May 20. They were baptized in 1977 and ordained deacon and deaconess on Pentecost, 1989. Mr. and Mrs. George serve in the Fayetteville and Jacksonville, North Carolina, congregations and were honored by the brethren with a delicious lunch buffet,

lovely cards, and gifts. All appreciate the longtime, faithful service and examples of Mr. and Mrs. George.

After services on the Sabbath of November 27, the Ashill (near Taunton) congregations in the UK surprised **Mr. and Mrs. Mike (Linda) Riley** with a cake in honor of their **50th anniversary**. Mr. and Mrs. Riley were married December 1, 1971, soon after God began opening their minds to His truth. They have served His people as deacon and deaconess since 2010. Mr. and Mrs. Riley have four children and four grandchildren. The brethren send best wishes to all the Riley family.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray (Ila) Shultz celebrated their **50th wedding anniversary** on April 23. Mr. and Mrs. Shultz were baptized in 1966 and 1971, respectively. They have been blessed with four daughters, one son, and five grandchildren. They attend and serve in the Walterboro, South Carolina, congregation. Congratulations on your example and 50 years of marriage!

Passover 2022 in Haiti—and Welcoming New Brethren

In April, Dr. Wilner Pierre was able to travel to Haiti for the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. He spent the Passover, the Night to Be Much Observed, and the First Day of Unleavened Bread with the Pétion-Ville congregation, where 14 baptized members partook of the Passover on Thursday evening, April 14. All members of the congregation attended the Night to be Much Observed on Friday, April 15. Due to safety concerns, the brethren were encouraged to eat and return home by 8:30 p.m. so that they could travel safely and be off the streets.

Before his departure for Trinidad on Sunday, April 17, Dr. Pierre had the wonderful opportunity to baptize seven

new brethren, who had been studying and attending weekly Sabbath services since before the start of the pandemic in 2020. Four of the newly baptized members had attended since the last *Tomorrow's World* Presentation held in Haiti, which occurred in 2019. Despite the random acts of violence and kidnappings in their country, the Haitian brethren maintain a positive attitude. With God's powerful intervention, things remained calm during the spring Holy Days. None of God's people were directly affected by any incidents of violence. Your prayers for their continued protection and for God to provide for all their needs are much appreciated.

—Deborah Quance

Living Church of God

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God's Complicated Book

Growing up, there were times when I would ask my mother a question about the Bible and her answer would only *sort of* make sense to me. I would respond with another question, and she would go “hmmmm” for a minute before saying, “We might have to ask a minister about that one.”

That used to startle me—and frustrate me a little. “Even Mom doesn’t know? But she’s supposed to be a Bible genius! She went to Ambassador College! What madness is this?” When I look back on those moments now, though, I find them encouraging, because even the “Bible genius” in my life had a lot to learn.

It can be easy for younger people in God’s Church to feel like we’re hopelessly ignorant when it comes to the Bible. As I’ve grown up surrounded by teenagers and young adults who genuinely want to know more, I’ve heard several admit to being afraid to talk about the Bible with others in the Church because of how “stupid” they think they’re going to sound. “The Bible’s so confusing, and I can’t shake the feeling that I don’t really understand what’s going on.”

And I get it. I’ve felt that way, too. God inspired a big, complicated book, and that’s *before* you get into all the translation issues. It contains seemingly countless names of people, places, and things, goes into a shocking amount of detail in some areas (and a puzzling lack of detail in others), and, just when you think you’re following what’s going on, it whips out a genealogy and fast-forwards a few hundred years. The Bible is beautiful, terrifying, comforting, and confusing, and any-

one who claims to have read it cover-to-cover without at least once going, “Wait, what?” is probably forgetting something.

But how could it be anything else? God wrote a book. Well, He didn’t literally write it Himself—He inspired men to do so (2 Timothy 3:16). But ultimately He is its Author, and in that sense, He wrote it.

Sometimes I have to let that sink in: God, the Eternal Family who knows all that can be known and is intimately aware of truths no human brain can begin to fathom, created a book explaining the deepest secrets of life, the universe, and everything—and you and I actually understand it a little bit. At least we get the gist! Even though Isaiah and Jeremiah lose us sometimes, Paul’s run-on sentences occasionally leave us blinking perplexedly, and our brains go numb every so often from all the numbers in Numbers, we still recognize characters, principles, laws, examples, and poetry that God Himself inspired.

If the Master of the universe created a book and has gifted us with even a cursory understanding of it, we shouldn’t be afraid to discuss it or ashamed of not knowing it better. We should be *excited* to discuss it, because doing so gives us the *opportunity* to know it better. And we should be incredibly grateful to our Creator for whatever knowledge we have of the most important words ever written.

Truly knowing the mind of God encompasses the entire purpose of human life, so we should probably expect it to take a lifetime. There might be a lot you don’t know right now, but there’s probably a lot the “Bible geniuses” in your life don’t know, either. So don’t be discouraged by what you don’t know. Be encouraged by what you *can* know—and thankful for what you know already.

—Thomas White