

THE PLAIN TRUTH

a magazine of understanding

DRAMATIC CHANGES SWEEP THE WORLD SCENE WHAT'S WRONG WITH PROSPERITY?



God and the Astronomers

the
PLAIN TRUTH
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Personal from...

The Knowledge Explosion

In the last twenty years, the world has experienced a KNOWLEDGE EXPLOSION! Its fund of knowledge—especially in technological and scientific fields—has more than DOUBLED. But the world's TROUBLES also have doubled over the same period of time.

But what about God-revealed knowledge? That knowledge—knowledge new to us—has burst on our consciousness like a shocking EXPLOSION! God said that at “the time of the end, many shall run to and fro, and KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED” (Dan. 12:4).

Do you realize HOW MUCH vital knowledge, revealed by GOD, has come to God's Church in the last three decades? When I look back on it, it is AMAZING!

Many in God's Church—actually more than 99 percent—have come into the Church in that last 30 years. Probably many of them, as well as readers of *The Plain Truth*, have never realized *how* THE TRUTH was revealed. Most members have been put into God's Church by the living Christ with THE TRUTH all laid out in order for them. When they came in, they came into a Church that already possessed the truth. They were able to learn it, and come to full understanding, in a very short time, comparatively. That is *not* the way Mrs. Loma Armstrong and I came in!

We don't have ALL the truth God's revelation (the Bible) holds for us, even yet. I believe we now have MOST that is vital to us at this particular time! But I had to come into God's truth a single doctrine, or a single bit of truth, at a time. It was not all laid out *in order*—in a clear-cut, plain, well-organized pattern—as it is today.

So I thought it would be interesting—and profitable—to start at the beginning and give you, briefly, the story of HOW God put His truth into His Church of this Philadelphia era (Rev. 3:7-13).

The Philadelphia era of God's Church had not come into existence when God first called me. I'm sure most of you know something of my background: of my early life in the advertising profession; of having my business taken away by nationwide conditions beyond my control three times; of being angered into my first actual STUDY of the Bible.

Mrs. Armstrong had been, in my view, “deceived” into taking up with religious fanaticism. She had begun keeping what I then called “the Jewish Sabbath.” Unable to argue her out of it, I started to study the Bible to find where it commanded “Thou shalt keep SUNDAY!” Of course I couldn't find it. But the study widened in scope and lasted about six months before truth began to clear before my mixed-up and befogged vision. I was simultaneously challenged on the theory of evolution.

Both challenges—the Sabbath and evolution—took me to the first chapter of Genesis. The simultaneous study of the evolutionary theory brought on an intensive study into the question: Does GOD exist? For evolution is the atheist's attempt to explain the presence of a CREATION without a Creator.

That six-months' study proved these BASIC truths:

- 1) God does exist.
- 2) Evolution stands DISPROVED—an error—a false theory.
- 3) The Bible (in its original writings) is the inspired and infallible INSTRUCTION BOOK of the Creator GOD to mankind.
- 4) The SABBATH is binding today, the SIGN that identifies GOD to us, and identifies US as HIS PEOPLE.
- 5) At the very last of this study, the fact that the *annual* holy days and festivals of God are also binding became apparent.
- 6) Also I had learned that the wages of sin is DEATH, not eternal life in hellfire—that it is eternal punishment, not eternal punishing.
- 7) I had learned also that eternal life is God's GIFT by His grace, imparted to us by His Holy Spirit.

Do you see, from this, HOW METHODICALLY God began revealing His truth to me? Those seven points are BASIC—the FOUNDATION! Knowledge of the TRUE God; getting rid of the false god (evolution); PROOF of the AUTHORITY of the Bible—the SOURCE of knowledge; the Sabbath as God's SIGN; the annual sabbaths, picturing God's PLAN (though I did not yet—at that time—understand their meaning); the PENALTY for sin; (Continued on page 41)

Part One:

THIS IS THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

This is the true story of the true Church, founded A.D. 31 by Jesus Christ, the unique and only voice giving a hopeless world its only and sure hope—the soon-coming peaceful world tomorrow!

The visitor, to put it mildly, was astonished! He was witnessing something he had never expected to see.

He was professor of comparative religion at one of the world's great universities, visiting a Canadian festival site of the world's largest annual church conclave. This, however, was one of the smaller of a score of such annual convention sites throughout the world. Seven thousand were here assembled for the eight-day festival.

At once the visitor was impressed by an atmosphere refreshingly *different*—and he had visited many

church conventions in many countries. Had these people been odd or fanatical, it would have been no new experience. He was well aware of religious groups who generated a temporary emotional fervor in their meetings. He was familiar, too, with those who were stiffly formal—and unhappy.

But here he was experiencing something which was, to him, unique. He was seated next to one of the ministers of the Worldwide Church of God.

“These members,” he volunteered, “obviously are solid and stable people, and they radiate an

inner happiness that is genuine. Life to them seems to have purpose and meaning. It's an enjoyable and healthy attitude I can't quite find words to describe.”

“Yes,” smiled the minister, “life *does* have purpose and meaning to our people. And they do radiate the inner joy you have observed because their lives have been changed by God's Holy Spirit, and because they are participating in and prayerfully backing the spreading of Christ's TRUE gospel—the same message originally proclaimed by Christ Himself.

“For nineteen centuries that mes-

sage had been suppressed. But this is the very generation that shall see that message fulfilled. It is God's time for that message of WORLD HOPE to be again proclaimed in POWER, worldwide. When one knows he has a part in giving a dying world its real and only hope, it is indeed a gratifying experience. That's what radiates that inner joy you see here."

"But how can this be? How can one explain it?" the professor asked.

"Well," responded the minister, "it begins with the story of the appearance on earth of the REAL Jesus Christ more than nineteen centuries ago. It's the story of His message from God to mankind. It's the story of the founding, the history and the mission of His Church. It's the story of the suppression by hostile world powers of Christ's real message—of spurious and counterfeit teachings deceiving the whole world for nineteen centuries—and, finally, of God's rejuvenating His people with His Spirit and vitality to carry that message of sure HOPE to this present world's last generation."

"Yes," observed the visitor thoughtfully, "I can believe that must be true."

Why Unique

These people are members of the Church of God, known in our day as the Worldwide Church of God. This Church is unique in practicing Christianity as A WAY OF LIFE, as well as a faith—even as it did originally in the days of the first-century apostles.

Its members are motivated by a supreme goal, inspired by knowing the transcendent human potential. They know the true values. They have found THE WAY that makes life truly meaningful, rewarding, abundant! It is the way the whole world ought to be living. What *is* that WAY OF LIFE?

It is the WAY OF LOVE—the way of outgoing concern for the good and welfare of others equal to self-concern. It is the way of cooperating, serving, helping, sharing—of consideration and patience.

More important, it is the way of humility and of obedience to, reli-

ance on, and worship solely toward God. It is the GOD-centered way. The world in general lives the way of "GET." It follows the SELF-centered way of vanity, of greed, lust, envy, jealousy and hate. It exalts the self. It sets its heart on self-gain and material possessions. It lives the way of competition, strife, unconcern for the welfare of others. It always seeks to get the best of every deal, indifferent to the fact that the other must take the worst.

In this world the successful are considered to be those who have piled up the biggest fortunes in material goods, not those who have given the most in spiritual gifts for the happiness of others. And yet there is the promise that *if* one seeks first the righteous and unselfish way, then material prosperity shall follow. Material possessions may add to happiness already attained, but they are not the SOURCE of happiness—they cannot produce it.

Actually, what almost none—including those who profess Christianity—seem to realize is that this "GIVE" way is based in an invisible, yet inexorable, spiritual LAW in active force and motion. It is a law as real, as inflexibly relentless, as the physical law of gravity. It governs and regulates all human relationships. Traditional Christianity seems to have forgotten that this law is summarized in the Ten Commandments, which are the basis of the Christian WAY OF LIFE.

And the lives of these people who were enjoying the convention in southwestern Canada are a living demonstration that the teachings of Jesus, which He carried out in the example He set by His own life here on earth—*living* the principles of the Ten Commandments—are in truth THE WAY of practical, rewarding and joyous living—and neither impractical platitudes nor a burdensome yoke of bondage. This WAY OF LIFE is paying off among Church of God people in joyous happiness, successful living, and abundant well-being! This GOD-centered way broadens and expands one's horizons. Self-centeredness constantly shrinks one's mental and spiritual outlook.

It is, to most who profess Chris-

tianity today, astonishing to learn that Jesus, Peter, Paul and all the first-century apostles taught obedience to this inexorable spiritual law—the WAY OF LOVE. It is surprising to most to learn that the Bible plainly shows that the religion of Christ—the only *true* Christianity—is a WAY OF LIFE as well as a living FAITH.

This spiritual law was set in living motion as the loving gift of humanity's Maker to CAUSE every desired GOOD. Yet humanity in general has been living a diametrically contrary way of life. There can be no law without penalty for violation. All the evils suffered down through the stream of time by humanity have simply been the PENALTIES *caused* by violation of that law.

How Knowledge Was Lost

How did mankind LOSE knowledge of the PURPOSE of human life—of WHAT man is, WHY he is, WHERE he is going—his transcendent potential—of THE WAY that is the only possible CAUSE of peace and happiness and everything good and desirable?

First, we might illustrate the world's sickness this way: A manufacturer sends along with his mechanized product an instruction manual. The instruction book explains what the product is, what it is intended to do, how to operate it to accomplish its intended purpose.

In like manner, man's Maker created a human mechanism far more perfectly designed than any man-produced product. And our Maker also sent along *His* INSTRUCTION MANUAL. In it He reveals *what* we are, *why* we are, *where* we are going, and above all, *how* to operate this human mechanism to accomplish its intended potential in peace, happiness and abundant well-being.

But the more perfectly designed GOD-MADE human mechanism is not functioning well. Human society is sick—filled with unrest, discontent, unhappiness, suffering. Human society does not know the way to PEACE. Crime and violence are rampant and on an accelerating spiral. Morals have skidded into the

(Continued on page 43)

GOD AND THE ASTRONOMERS

The universe began with a big bang, according to modern science. But the origin and ultimate fate of that primordial cosmic egg remains an embarrassing riddle that has brought astronomers—unexpectedly and a bit reluctantly—straight into the problem of the existence of a Creator God.

by Robert A. Ginskey

Albert Einstein once observed that “the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible.” Not everyone would agree with that statement, for, although man has been fascinated by the grandeur and mystery of the universe for many millennia, its ultimate size, structure, and origin have remained an intriguing but unsolved riddle.

Historically, it seems that every culture has created a myth to explain the nature of the cosmos. The Greeks intertwined the creation of the world with the whims and family disputes of the gods. But our more sophisticated civilization may also have generated some myths of its own, impelled by our conviction that physical laws are universal and our hope that the universe, on a grand scale, is fundamentally simple and, as Einstein believed, comprehensible.

From ancient times until only half a century ago, the prevailing cosmological belief was that the universe must be unchanging. The universe, according to conventional wisdom, was essentially static—a system of planets, stars, and nebulae which, in the large, was somehow held in a fixed and orderly arrangement. Indeed, when Einstein first

proposed his relativity model of the universe, he added a special factor known as the “cosmological constant,” which allowed the universe to remain static despite the mutual gravitational attraction which would tend to make the universe collapse.

An Expanding Universe

Then, in the late 1920s, astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered that in every direction all the distant galaxies appeared to be moving away from the earth. This conclusion was based on the famous “red shift” in the spectrum of the light coming from the galaxies. Just as the sound coming from a train whistle or ambulance siren is lowered in pitch or frequency if the train or ambulance is traveling away from the hearer, so the light from distant galaxies is lowered in frequency (reddened) if the galaxy is traveling away from the earth.

When Hubble plotted the estimated distances to the various galaxies as a function of their apparent velocities (as implied by the “red shift”), he found an amazing correlation: The more distant a galaxy, the greater its velocity. The implication was clear: The universe was not static; the universe was expanding.

But if the universe was ex-

panding, it must have been smaller in the past. By working backwards in time, it was easy to show that the universe must at one time have been highly compressed. From such reasoning came the concept that the universe started from a great explosion some billions of years ago. Astrophysicist George Gamow put it more poetically. “The universe,” he said, “began with a big bang.”

Steady State?

Of course, other models for the expanding universe were also possible. Astronomer Fred Hoyle, for example, accepted the expansion of the universe (the evidence seemed overwhelming), but he argued that new matter may be constantly introduced (by some as-yet-unknown process), so that new galaxies are constantly being formed. Thus creation was viewed as a “continuous process,” and a specific unique “origin” of the entire universe was precluded.

Philosophically, Hoyle’s steady state cosmology had a great appeal.

THE ORIGIN AND FATE of the starry heavens has intrigued mankind for millennia. Now, modern astronomy is providing some startling answers to the riddle of creation.



There was something very satisfying in the concept that the universe was eternal, having no beginning and no end. The theory also avoided the knotty problem of what the universe was like *before* the beginning, as well as the embarrassing conundrum of how the universe was able to achieve the highly compressed state needed for big bang cosmology.

During the 1960s, however, the steady state theory was severely discredited as a great deal of new evidence came to light.

First, an extension of Hubble's observations of the expanding universe clearly implied that the expansion must have begun at a definite time in the past, about 10 to 20 billion years ago. Second, the older star clusters also seemed to be about 10 billion years old. And finally, radioactive elements appeared to have been in existence about 5 to 10 billion years. The close agreement of these three calculations derived by diverse methods appeared to be a striking corroboration of the big bang model of the universe: There was a beginning.

Another major blow to the steady state theory was the discovery, in 1965, of the so-called cosmic background radiation. This whisper of radiation appears to fill all of space in every direction, and its existence was in fact predicted by astronomers as a remnant of the original big bang. Its discovery was a powerful confirmation of the big bang model of the universe.

Other observations on the numbers and locations of radio sources and quasars further undermined the credibility of the steady state theory. The result was that by the 1970s virtually all astronomers had concluded that the steady state was wrong and that the big bang was essentially correct.

Open vs. Oscillating

There remained, however, a perplexing question. Would the universe expand forever, or would it eventually stop expanding and collapse, perhaps to be reborn in another big bang?

If the universe expands forever,

this obviously implies that the creation of the universe was a unique, one-shot affair. The universe was created at a definite time in the past—some billions of years ago—and is now in the process of expanding to infinity. We therefore live at a unique moment in the history of the cosmos.

On the other hand, if every expanding phase of the universe is eventually succeeded by a contracting phase, which is followed by an expanding phase, *ad infinitum*, then the concept of a unique creation event loses all meaning. Such an "oscillating universe" has much the same philosophical attraction as the steady state. Indeed, astronomers have found the oscillating universe theory so attractive and, for some reason, so comforting, that they often comment on the compelling "theological" arguments for such a universe.

Actually, the implications of a perpetually oscillating universe are profound, especially as they relate to the theory of evolution. In effect, an oscillating universe could totally demolish all arguments against evolution which are based on probability.

The logic is as follows: 1) If the universe contains a finite amount of matter, and 2) if the universe is endlessly oscillating (i.e., if the universe is infinitely old), then 3) since there is only a finite number of combinations for a finite number of atoms, it follows that 4) every conceivable combination must eventually be repeated an infinite number of times!

This is not a new concept. In fact, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche developed this principle in his "doctrine of eternal recurrence," a notion which he had encountered in the Pythagoreans. Nonetheless, the point is that no matter how improbable an event (other than zero probability), if we consider an infinite number of trials, the event becomes an absolute certainty. Applying this reasoning to the theory of evolution, it would mean that the evolution of life was inevitable.

Thus it is interesting that while secular astronomers may consider

an oscillating universe a philosophical and even a theological necessity, religious fundamentalists must view the implications of an oscillating universe with a certain amount of skepticism if not consternation.

Critical Parameters

We are faced, therefore, with a most intriguing question. Is the universe in fact "open"—will it expand indefinitely? Or is the universe "closed"—will it eventually fall back on itself, perhaps to be reborn? To resolve the question, astronomers need to know the rate at which the universe is presently expanding and the rate at which the expansion is changing. If both these factors can be measured, then the past, present and future of the universe can be determined.

In the past few years, astronomer Allan Sandage and others have painstakingly developed various distance-estimating methods to a relatively high level of reliability. Plugging in the red-shift-determined velocities, astronomers find the universe is expanding at a rate of about 55 kilometers per second for every million parsecs of distance (a parsec is about 30 trillion kilometers or 19 trillion miles).

But remember that in the big bang model of the universe the expansion is expected to slow down with the passage of time as the initial velocities of the different parts of the universe are slowed down by their mutual gravitational attraction. The universe acts somewhat as does a ball thrown upward from the surface of the earth. The ball slows down, stops, and eventually falls back to earth. If it is thrown with greater initial velocity, it travels farther before falling back. But, if the initial velocity is greater than what is called the "escape velocity," then the ball will never fall back but will travel upward forever, decelerating continuously as it goes, but never coming back.

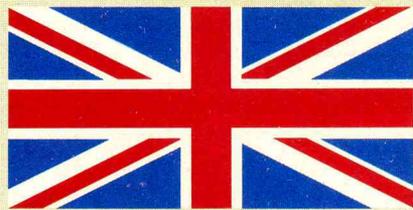
If the planet from which the ball is thrown is more massive than the earth, we would expect its gravitational attraction to be greater and

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PART TWO:



THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN IN PROPHECY



The very fate of the Bible as the revealed Word of God—the evidence of the existence of God—hangs on the answer to this momentous question: Did God keep the promises of national wealth and greatness He made to the patriarch Abraham? The Jewish people did not fulfill these promises. They do not refer to the Church. Did God fail? Or has He made good this colossal promise unknown to the world? The true answer is the most astonishing revelation of Bible truth and of prophecy.

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Now we come to a most vital distinction, and a bit of Bible truth known to but a very few. Very few, indeed, have ever noticed that the promises to Abraham were twofold. But the Bible itself makes sharp distinction between these two phases of the promises.

The spiritual promises—the promises of the “one seed,” Christ, and of salvation through Him—the Bible calls the *sceptre*. But the material and national promises relating to many nations, national wealth, prosperity and power, and possession of the Holy Land, the Bible calls the *birthright*.

Race, Not Grace

Let us understand the meaning of the terms:

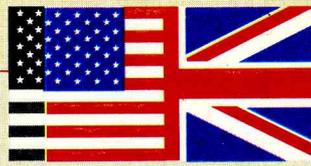
“*Birthright*: native right or privilege”—*Standard Dictionary*; “any right acquired by birth”—*Webster’s*. A birthright is something which is one’s right, by birth. It has nothing to do with grace, which is unmerited pardon and a free gift which is *not* one’s right. It has to do with

race, not grace. Birthright possessions are customarily passed down from father to eldest son.

“*Sceptre*: kingly office; royal power; badge of command or sovereignty”—*Standard Dictionary*. The promised kingly line culminates in *Christ*, and involves *grace* to all.

We have seen how both sets of promises, right of birth and gift of grace, were unconditionally made by God to Abraham. Both the birthright and the sceptre were re-promised by the Eternal to Isaac and to Jacob. But the fact that should open your eyes, as a joyous truth newly discovered, is that from that point these two sets of promises became separated! The sceptre promises of the kingly line culminating in Christ, and of grace through Him, were handed on to JUDAH, son of Jacob and father of all Jews. But the astonishing truth is that the birthright promises were never given to the Jews!

Let that be repeated! Realize this! The birthright promises were never given to the Jews!



Turn to these passages—read them in your own Bible! “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . .” (Gen. 49:10).

“. . . But the birthright was Joseph’s” (I Chron. 5:2).

Of course it is well understood that the sceptre went to Judah and was handed down through the Jews. King David was of the tribe of Judah. All succeeding kings of David’s dynasty were of the House of David, tribe of Judah. Jesus Christ was born of the House of David and the tribe of Judah.

Another eye-opening truth completely unrealized by most people today is the fact that only a *part* of the “children of Israel” were Jews.

Read that little understood fact again!

The full explanation and proof of this must be reserved for a later article. *Only* those of the three tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi were Jews. While all Jews are Israelites, most Israelites are *not* Jews!

So understand! The birthright promise *did not* pass on to the Jews! But the sceptre—the promise of *Christ* and of *grace*—was passed on to the Jews! “Salvation,” Jesus said, “is of the Jews!” (John 4:22.) “The gospel of Christ,” wrote Paul, “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the *JEW first*, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). The promises of *grace* were handed down through *JUDAH!*

But the promises which the Bible terms the “birth-right” have not been understood at all. Few have ever noticed that God made any promises to Abraham other than the sceptre. Few know what is in the Bible!

Birthright Never Given to the Jews

Fewer still have understood that these great national material promises were never given to the Jews! The astonishing and vital fact that many have overlooked is “the birthright is *JOSEPH’S*.” And, as we shall see later, neither Joseph nor his descendants were Jews! Astounding as it may be, it’s true!

This knowledge about the birthright is the pivot of this entire truth which will prove *the key* to the understanding of all prophecy! It’s of supreme importance that you get this clearly in mind!

“Birthright,” as defined above, includes only that which comes by right of birth. No one can receive eternal life as a *right*, from natural birth. If it were our right, inherited by birth, it would not be by grace. Salvation comes by *grace*—God’s *gift*, by undeserved pardon—undeserved favor. We can receive only *material* possessions as a right by birth. And when that right is passed down through generations to ever-multiplying descendants, it finally devolves into a *NATIONAL* inheritance. It confers only material possessions, power, or position. It does *not* bestow *spiritual* blessings. It is a matter of race, not grace!

There is another distinction between a birthright and grace we ought to understand. A birthright, as before

stated, is normally passed on from father to eldest son. There are no conditions which the recipient is required to meet. The son does nothing to qualify for it. He receives it as his right for no other reason than that he happened to be born his father’s son. He has a right to it without earning it or qualifying to be worthy of it. He could, however, *disqualify* himself to keep, or even to receive it.

But the gift of immortality received by grace *does* have qualifying conditions! It is not your right, nor mine, to receive the gift of eternal life—to be actually *born* as God’s son—literally a member of the God *FAMILY!* Think what conditions would result if it were! A rebellious, defiant, hostile, God-hating criminal or atheist could shake his fist at God and say: “Look, God! I hate you. I defy you! I refuse to obey you! But I *demand* your gift of eternal life! It’s my *RIGHT!* I want to be born into your divine family—to receive all the vast *POWER* of a son of God, so I can use that power to oppose you! I want to make your family a house divided against itself. I will cause friction, hostility, hatred, unhappiness among all your children! I demand that *POWER*, as your *gift*, as my *right*, so that I may abuse that power—use it for *EVIL!*”

Grace Requires Conditions

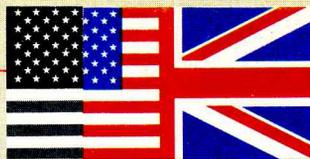
Most professing “Christians”—and many teachings of what is called “traditional Christianity”—say there are no conditions, nothing that *we* must do to receive God’s glorious grace. They deny that God requires obedience to His law! They twist the truth around by saying that would be *earning* one’s salvation! They *do* demand it of God, while they still rebel against His law and refuse to keep it!

Think where that would lead! Understand this! Eternal life is, indeed, God’s free gift. You can’t earn it! But it is not your right! You cannot demand it of God as your right, while you defy God, rebel against His government, refuse to let Him rule your life His way!

Therefore God has imposed *CONDITIONS!* Those conditions do not earn you a thing! But God *gives* His Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).

The word “grace” means unmerited, undeserved *pardon!* God *pardons* those who *REPENT!* And “repent” means to *turn from* rebellion, hostility, disobedience. “Repent” means to turn to obedience to God’s law. The fact that God chooses *not* to give this wonderful gift—this gift of immortality, which carries with it divine power—to those who would misuse it for harm and evil; the fact that He chooses to give it only to those who will rightly use it—does not mean it comes by *works* instead of grace. If there were *no* conditions, then everyone could demand it—and it would be received as a right by birth, instead of by grace!

The very *fact* of grace makes necessary God’s required qualifications. But it still is an undeserved *GIFT!* Obedi-



ence does not earn anything—that is only what we *owe* to God. A birthright requires no qualification. It is a right by birth.

What the Birthright Conferred

Just what special material inheritance was passed on by the birthright few have understood. Yet it conferred the richest, most valuable material inheritance ever passed from father to son—the most colossal wealth and power ever amassed by man or empire! The magnitude of this birthright is staggering!

This legacy guaranteed, unconditionally, multitudinous population, untold wealth and material resources, national greatness and world power.

It includes all the first phase of God's tremendous promises to Abraham. This legacy guaranteed on the authority of God Almighty, *unconditionally*, multitudinous population, untold wealth and material resources, national greatness and world power!

Not only had God promised that a world-dominant nation and a company, or commonwealth, of nations whose peoples descended from Abraham would be as populous as the grains of sand of the seashore—as the stars in multitude; not only did He promise they should possess the *gate* (Fenton translation: gates) of enemy nations, which alone signifies world dominance and power; but the birthright finally included vast material wealth and unlimited national resources. That was made plain in the blessing given to Jacob, as we shall soon see.

The Birthright Denied to Ishmael

Except in cases of divine intervention, which occurred three times, the inheritance of the birthright fell automatically to the eldest son in each generation.

Isaac was chosen by the Eternal to inherit both the sceptre and birthright. Abraham had other sons. Ishmael was the eldest. But God chose Isaac, and "Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac" (Gen. 25:5). Isaac, however, was Abraham's firstborn *lawful* son. Ishmael was the son of Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian handmaid.

Abraham loved Ishmael and desired for him to have the birthright. "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Gen. 17:18.)

Sarah his wife was barren. "And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I . . . will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly . . . and I will make him a

great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac . . ." (verses 19-21).

Regarding the future nation to spring from Ishmael, the angel of the Eternal had said to Hagar: "He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell to the east [correct translation] of all his brethren" (Gen. 16:12).

Two clues are given here: 1) Ishmael's descendants were to become a great nation but the birthright nations were to be greater; and 2) they were to dwell to the east of their brethren—that is, of Isaac's descendants who had the birthright. The children of Ishmael have become the Arabs of today. The nation and company of nations who hold the birthright must, therefore, be larger, wealthier, more powerful, and must be found geographically west of the Arab nations.

Abraham was the human type of God the Father, and Isaac of Christ. There are many parallels. Space prohibits expounding them here, except to note that if we are Christ's we are Abraham's children (Gal. 3:29), and Abraham is the "*father* of the faithful" (Gal. 3:7); that Abraham was called on to be willing to sacrifice his only (legitimate) son (Gen. 22:2) even as God gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, for the sins of the world; that Isaac's wife Rebekah is a type of the Church, and she had to fall in love with him and accept him as her husband before she saw him with her eyes; and that Isaac was born *by promise*, and by a miracle from God, even as Jesus was miraculously born of the virgin Mary.

Isaac had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the firstborn, and therefore the legal inheritor of the birthright. But Esau undervalued it and sold it to Jacob.

Esau Sells the Birthright

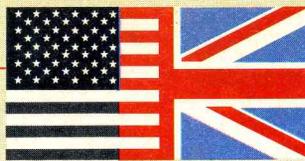
God had chosen Jacob to possess these promises before the twins were born. But Jacob, influenced by his mother instead of waiting on the Eternal, resorted to deception and took it from Esau.

The Eternal had said to Rebekah, regarding Esau and Jacob, that they were the beginning of two nations—"two manner of people. . . the one people shall be stronger than the other people," said God, "and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23).

Their descendants, then, were to become two different types of people. The story of Jacob's premature and deceptive acquisition of the birthright continues, in Genesis 25:27-34.

"And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage [boiled porridge—Fenton's translation]; and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called *Edom*."

"Edom" means, literally, "red soup," and is so trans-



lated in the Fenton version. It will prove another “key” to Bible understanding for the reader to carefully fasten in his memory the fact that “Edom” refers to ESAU. Many prophecies pertaining to the present and future employ the name Edom. They cannot be understood unless it is realized that they refer to the descendants of Esau, primarily the Turkish nation today.

“And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.” Later, Jacob subtly took from Esau his blessing. The story of this deception is found in the 27th chapter of Genesis.

Jacob’s Deception

It was at a time when Isaac was old, his eyesight dimmed with age. Nearing the end of his life, he called Esau and requested that he go to the field and hunt for venison, prepare it and bring it to him. He would then bestow the blessing confirming the birthright.

But Rebekah overheard, and sent Jacob quickly for two kids of the goats. These she prepared in the same tempting way that Isaac loved his venison. Then she took some of Esau’s clothes and put them on Jacob. Now Esau was very hairy, while Jacob was smooth, so Rebekah carefully placed the skins of the two kids upon Jacob’s hands, arms, and smooth part of his neck.

In this disguise, with his imitation venison, Jacob went in to receive his father’s blessing. “And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn” (Gen. 27:19).

Isaac was surprised he had found the venison so quickly and became suspicious. Jacob lied again, asserting the Eternal had brought the venison to him. Isaac detected the voice was that of Jacob.

“And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau’s hands, so he blessed him” (verses 21-23).

What the Birthright Included

Now notice carefully what that blessing included!

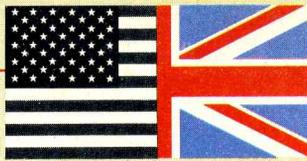
“And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Eternal hath blessed: Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine [Fenton’s translation: increase and possession]: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee” (verses 26-29).

Note it! Materialistic promises, *national* in nature, every one! Not one of them pertaining to salvation. None having to do with life after death. Nothing spiritual here! All pertaining purely to this present fleshly life! NATIONAL prosperity—rainfall, plenty of corn and wine, the fatness of the earth, or, as the margin reads, the fat places of the earth—*increase and possession*. “*Nations shall bow down to thee!*” “*Let people serve thee.*”



Grant Heilman

HUGE FLOCKS OF SHEEP were among the blessings promised to Abraham’s descendants.



When Esau returned and found how Jacob had sup-
planted him, he was very bitter. He pleaded for a bless-
ing, too. But Isaac could not retract the blessing given to
Jacob. So he passed on to Esau the following prophecy:

“Behold, thy dwelling shall be [correct translation:
away from] the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of
heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live,
and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass
when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt
break his yoke from off thy neck. And Esau hated Ja-
cob . . .” (verses 39-41).

In verse 39, quoted above, the Hebrew preposition
min should be translated “from” or “away from,” not
“of.” Actually, the prophesied lot of Esau was more of a
curse than a blessing. The Revised Standard Version
translates it: “Behold, away from the fatness of the earth
shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of
heaven on high.” Moffatt renders it: “Far from rich soil
on earth shall you live, far from the dew of heaven on
high.” Actually, the Hebrew words convey the *dual*
meaning, and *both* have happened to Esau’s descen-
dants.

Prophecy for Turkey

The sparse records of history, with other proofs, show
that many of the descendants of Esau became known as
Turks. Therefore we must remember that all prophecies
pertaining to the latter days referring to Edom, or Esau,
refer generally to the Turkish nation.

In Isaac’s dying prophecy, he foretold that Esau’s
descendants would come to a time when they should
have dominion, and then break the yoke of the Israelites
from off their necks. That has happened. The children of
Israel, through sin, were driven out of the promised land

that belonged with the birthright. The Turks came to
power and dominion and for many centuries possessed
that land. Those descendants, the Turkish people, occu-
pied Palestine 400 years before Britain took it in 1917.
Esau’s descendants always have lusted for that land,
central promise of the birthright! The Turks have truly
lived by the sword!

The Lesson for Us

But let’s return to our story. Before Jacob was born, God
had spoken to his mother and revealed to her that Jacob
should receive the birthright. Instead, however, of wait-
ing for the Eternal to bring this about in His own way,
she schemed with Jacob to take it by lying and decep-
tion.

There is a lesson here for us today. As Isaac is, in a
sense, a type of Christ, so Rebekah is, in a sense, a type
of the Church, in which still dwells weakness and carnal-
ity.

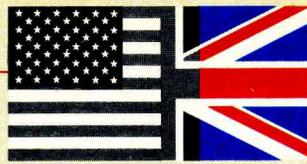
Sometimes we become too much in a hurry. We ask
the Almighty for things He has promised in His Word.
Then we try to dictate to Him just *how* and *when* it shall
be accomplished! We need to learn to “wait upon the
Lord.” He always does things in His way, and in His
own time. And He distinctly tells us that His ways are
not our ways! Once we commit a thing to the Almighty,
let us have not only the trust, but the respect, for the
One so great, that we will leave the matter in His hands.

Had Jacob trusted the Eternal instead of taking this
into his own hands in a wrong way, the birthright would
have come to him more honorably. Under the circum-
stances, Jacob, which name means “supplanter,” had far
more difficulty securing *God’s* blessing upon the precious
possession than his predecessors.



Bob Taylor

BLESSING: golden wheat—millions of acres—promised to the birthright nations.



But after years of trial and test—after finally wrestling all night with the angel (Gen. 32:24-29)—after confessing his name as “supplanter”—God bestowed His blessing upon Jacob, took away his reproachful name, and gave him a new, untainted name, ISRAEL—which means “prevailer,” or “overcomer with God.”

And thus we see that through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the promises were handed down to one man at a time. There was no branching out toward national growth until the days of Jacob. For three generations it had been a “one-man nation.” But Jacob had twelve sons, and through them the future *great nation* and *company of nations* were started on their way.

Reuben Lost the Birthright

The next legal inheritor of the birthright was Reuben, firstborn son of Israel, by his first wife, Leah. But Reuben, like Esau, lost it. And Joseph, eleventh-born of Jacob, but firstborn of Rachel, his second and truly loved wife, received it.

The birthright belonged, legally, to Reuben, not Joseph. It is related in I Chronicles 5:1-2 how it fell to Joseph: “Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright [or, RSV, “so that he (Reuben) is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright”]). For *Judah* prevailed above his brethren, and of *him came the chief ruler*; but the BIRTHRIGHT WAS JOSEPH’S.”

So at this point the two divisions of the Abrahamic promises—the birthright, involving material and national promises, and the sceptre, including the kingly and spiritual promises—were separated.

It is of first importance to keep in mind that the birthright, including the promised land now called Palestine, the assurance of multitudinous population, material and national prosperity, dominance over other nations, *was now given to JOSEPH and his sons*.

Mark that well! This BIRTHRIGHT was not to be inherited by *all* the tribes of Israel! It was not given to the Jews! Only a part of the Israelites—the *descendants of Joseph*—was to inherit these tremendous *national* promises!

These material promises for *this* life, then, belonged to an altogether different tribe among the children of Israel than the sceptre promise of the kingly line culminating in Jesus Christ, which spiritual promise belonged in the tribe of Judah!

These national promises of the multitudinous seed then became the possession of an altogether different *tribe* than the promise of the one seed, Christ, who sprang from Judah! This fact of the two sets of promises, stressed in the preceding installment, ought to be plain and clear to every reader by now. Fix it permanently in

mind. It is one of the vital keys to Bible understanding!

At the time of Jacob’s death, he and his sons were living in Egypt. We assume, of course, that you are familiar with the story of how Joseph was sold by his brothers into Egypt; of how he there became food administrator and prime minister, next under the king and in actual rule of nation; of the seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine, in which food had been stored only in Egypt under Joseph’s supervision; of the visit of Joseph’s brothers to Egypt in quest of food, and how Joseph induced them to bring their father and brother Benjamin down to Egypt; and finally, of the dramatic revelation of Joseph’s identity to his brethren, amid weeping and rejoicing.

And how prophetic that was! As we shall see, Joseph, in his descendants, shall soon once again have his true identity revealed to his brothers—and to the world. And how *hidden* from the world is that identity now!

Birthright to Joseph’s Sons

And now the time came to pass on the birthright to another generation. Let us re-create the dramatic scene.

It occurred in Egypt, after Joseph had succeeded in having his father brought there, as well as all his brothers. Joseph, remember, was prime minister of the nation.

It was reported to Joseph that Jacob, his father, was ill. He took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, sons of an Egyptian mother, and hastened to the dying patriarch’s bedside.

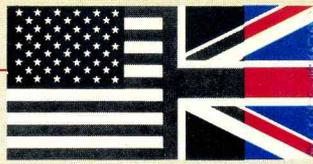
“And Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession” (Gen. 48:2-4).

Notice carefully these promises!

The birthright is about to be passed on to another generation. Notice that nothing whatsoever is said about *all* the families of the earth being blessed in his seed—the ONE seed. Nothing is said about kings. Nothing is said about spiritual blessings whatever. *These* promises are those of the birthright. *These* promises are of *multiple seed*—a multitude of people—and *possession of the promised land*. Now let us continue.

“And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine” (verse 5).

Thus did Jacob *adopt* Joseph’s two sons, making them, legally, his own sons. This, no doubt, was done because they were half-blooded Egyptians. Israel made them his own adopted sons, so the birthright could be passed on to them. Notice, too, that in the first verse of this 48th chapter of Genesis, Manasseh’s name is mentioned first,



“And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau” (Genesis 27:22).

because Manasseh was the elder. But old Jacob now mentioned the name of Ephraim first. Here we see supernatural guidance!

Jacob said to Joseph: “Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see” (verses 9-10).

The birthright, remember, belongs legally to the firstborn, unless altered by divine intervention. The inheritor of the birthright, in receiving the blessing conferred upon him, should have had Jacob’s *right* hand resting upon his head. That is why “Joseph took them both, *Ephraim* in his right hand *toward Israel’s left hand*, and *Manasseh* in his left hand *toward Israel’s right hand*, and brought them near unto him” (verse 13).

Name Israel Given to Joseph’s Sons

But once again the Eternal intervened in conferring this momentous birthright! Jacob, though blind so he could not see the lads before him, *crossed his hands*, “and

Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and *let my name be named on them*, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth” (verses 14-16).

Let *who* grow into this promised multitude? Let *whose* descendants become that numerous seed, which shall number into billions? Not Judah, the father of the Jews—note it!—but **EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH!** Why have the eyes and understanding of church leaders and Bible students been blinded to this plain fact of Scripture?

Notice, Israel did not confer this blessing on just one, but on *both*—“Bless the lads,” he said. This blessing went upon them jointly. “Let my name be named on them” was part of this blessing. His name was **ISRAEL**. Hence, it was the descendants of *these* lads, not the descendants of Judah, or the Jews, who were named **ISRAEL**. How clear it is that the name **ISRAEL** was to be indelibly stamped on **EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH!**

A shocking fact—and yet plainly *proved*, right before your eyes! And remember, this scripture needs no “interpretation” or “special meaning” or “hidden symbolism” for you to understand! Here is the plain, simple statement that Jacob’s name, which was changed to *Israel*, would become the very **POSSESSION** and *property*—the label on the peoples of Ephraim and Manasseh!

WHO, then, according to your Bible, is the real Israel (racially and nationally) of today?

Ephraim and Manasseh!

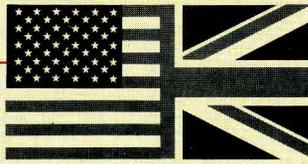
Ephraim and Manasseh *together* received the *right* to the name **ISRAEL**. It was to become the national name of their descendants. And their descendants were never Jews! Fix this fact firmly in your mind!

Thus it is that many of the prophecies about “Israel” or “Jacob” do not refer to Jews or to any of the nations that are today the descendants of the other tribes of Israel. Mark that well! Few, indeed, are the clergymen, theologians, or professed Bible scholars who know that today. Many *refuse* to know it!

Together the descendants of these two lads, Ephraim and Manasseh, were to grow into the promised multitude—the nation and company of nations. These national blessings are poured upon them jointly. These are the collective blessings which the lads together received—but not the other tribes!

Jacob Crosses Hands

But at this juncture, Joseph noticed that Jacob’s right hand was not resting upon the head of the firstborn. He endeavored to remove it.



“Not so, my father,” said Joseph, “for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he [Manasseh] also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly *his younger brother shall be greater than he*, and his seed shall become a multitude [or, COMPANY] of nations. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh” (Gen. 48:18-20). Here the promises are no longer collective, possessed jointly. Jacob now was prophesying as to the blessings of each, individually.

As we have seen from the preceding installment, the numerous seed was to become “a nation, and a company of nations.” Now we see that the “nation” to become truly great is to spring from the seed of Manasseh, the son of Joseph. The “company of nations” is to grow out of Ephraim. Notice that, before dividing the promises, this prophetic blessing indicated plainly that the descendants of these lads should remain *together*, and together grow into a great multitude, then become separated, Manasseh becoming a *great nation*, and Ephraim a still greater *company of nations*.

Here, then, is yet another detail of the future national characteristics of these people. We must not look for the fulfillment among the sons of Judah. Nor among descendants of any other of the twelve tribes.

The promise of a future great nation and a company of nations, together great for multitude, rich in national material prosperity, possessing the “gates” of the earth’s other nations, applies solely to these lads and the two tribes which sprang from them.

We might add here, too, that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh never became such in the times of Bible history. Some might suppose the house of Judah was the nation, and the ten tribes, the company of nations. But *none* of these promises went to Judah. Nor were they to be fulfilled in any of the other tribes, save Joseph’s double portion, the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh!

It was Ephraim who was to become the company, or multitude, of nations, and Manasseh who was to become the great single nation. And these promises never were fulfilled in them, in times of Bible history.

If these promises ever have been fulfilled, we must look for their fulfillment between the close of Bible history and the present!

Prophecy for Today

While still in the spirit of prophecy, Jacob called his twelve sons together to tell them what their posterity should become “*in the last days*.”

Here are prophecies which should assist us in identifying the tribes of Israel *today*—for surely these are the *last days*! We shall here take space to consider only the destiny of Judah and of Joseph. Joseph’s descendants

were actually divided into two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, and usually are called by those tribal names instead of the name “Joseph.” The fact that these tribes are here spoken of as “Joseph” plainly indicates that the prophecy applies jointly to Ephraim and Manasseh.

“And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you *in the last days*. . . . Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver [margin, ruler’s staff] from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen. 49:1, 8-10). The Hebrew word here translated *Shiloh* means the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, or the *one “seed”* of Abraham. (See *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible*.)

Promised to Joseph

Regarding Joseph, the combined Ephraim-Manasseh tribes, at this present day, Israel prophesied: “*Joseph is a fruitful bough* [here is pictured the birthright promise of multitudes in fulfillment], even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches [margin, *daughters*] run over the wall” (verse 22).

In other words, in the last days we are to find the children of Joseph a numerous people, a great nation and a company of nations, whose daughters, or children, shall “run over the wall”—that is, run over, or past, the nation’s boundary—in other words, be a colonizing people! Further, in the prophecy for Joseph for these “last days”: “. . . the Almighty . . . shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from [margin: is prince among] his brethren” (verses 25-26).

We shall see that these descendants of Joseph, possessing these birthright promises—to become numerous, to colonize, thus spreading to the “north and the south, and east and the west,” until they encircled the globe, to possess the “gates” of enemy nations—never returned to Jerusalem from Assyria, where they were driven with the ten tribes after 721 B.C., and were never again mixed with Jews from that time! Here are promises and prophecies which never have been fulfilled by the Jews, by the Church, by the American Indian, or any other fanciful counterparts of modern Israel. But they *are fulfilled* today if the Word of God is to stand! □

(To Be Continued)



VIOUARD—Gamma/Liaison

DRAMATIC CHANGES SWEEP THE WORLD SCENE

Japan and China conclude a "friendship treaty"; China's leader tours Eastern Europe, taunting Russia; a worried Kremlin woos West Germany; relations sour between the U.S. and Europe. A dramatic realignment of political forces is under way. Are the major nations and power blocs of the world moving into the final end-time configuration foretold in Bible prophecy?

by Gene H. Hogberg

Not since the hectic months immediately preceding World War II has the world seen such dramatic diplomatic activity as has occurred in the last half of 1978.

On August 12, Japan and China signed a "peace and friendship treaty" effectively linking China's 900 million people and vast, still largely untapped resources with the unparalleled manufacturing, technological and marketing skills of Asia's industrial dynamo.

Only days afterward, Hua Kuo-feng, China's Communist Party chairman and prime minister (he holds both titles) em-

barked on an historic tour of Europe—the first leader ever in China's long history to travel west of Moscow. The smiling, confident

Chairman Hua boldly denounced archfoe Russia's policies right in the U.S.S.R.'s Balkan backyard, in the two maverick Communist nations of

Yugoslavia and Romania. (Photo above shows Hua dancing the Romanian *hora* in Bucharest.) His 17-day tour also took him to oil-rich Iran, another of the Soviet Union's wary neighbors.

China's spectacular thrust into the world arena has thrown the Soviet Union into a tizzy. For the moment, the Kremlin is at a complete loss as to what to do. Moscow once thought that it had "contained" the feared "Yellow Peril." Now the tables have



Thomsen PT

SOVIET PRESIDENT BREZHNEV discusses a point with West German President Scheel during visit to Bonn in May.

turned. It is instead the Soviets who feel encircled by China's bold initiatives with Japan and in the Balkans.

Reconciliation with the new men running China is clearly out of the question for Moscow, at least for the foreseeable future. Realizing that affairs are going from bad to worse along her eastern flank, Moscow is making renewed efforts to shore up her position in the West.

The Kremlin is doing its best to woo the West Germans, the French and other Western Europeans away from their economic and military partnership with the United States. The Soviets are playing up to European fears about the fate of the U.S. dollar and America's rapidly declining role as defender of the free world. Moscow is hinting once again that it is willing to offer non-aggression guarantees to Western Europe in return for Bonn and the other European capitals abandoning NATO.

If Moscow's policy succeeds, the biggest loser of all in this worldwide diplomatic game of change-your-partner will be the United States—abandoned by its disillusioned allies and trading partners, left isolated on a mountain of unwanted dollars.

China's Bold "Breakout"

Let's examine these remarkable developments in more detail—and see what they mean in the light of Bible prophecy.

All of a sudden, China has burst upon the world scene, changing in a manner thought inconceivable only two years ago when Mao Tse-tung, China's leader throughout its Communist era, died.

Peking's new pragmatic leaders are determined to modernize the world's most populous country and make it a genuine global power by the year 2000. This enormous undertaking will require the expenditure of at least \$350 billion dollars!

As one news analyst put it: "What we are witnessing is the beginning of a new era in world relationships. This will be the China Era. It's just beginning. Today China is a relatively poor, developing nation. In the next fifteen or twenty years it will be a major world power."

On the diplomatic front, China is seeking new allies of any political stripe who can provide the economic as well as military help she desires to strengthen herself against her archrival Soviet Russia. Chairman Hua Kuo-feng's tour of Eastern Europe will certainly be followed quickly by visits to several capitals in Western Europe.

This autumn, with little advance warning, thousands of Chinese students descended upon universities in Western Europe and the United States in search of up-to-date training, mainly in the scientific and

Peking's new leaders have broken the grip of Maoist isolation. They are determined to modernize the world's most populous country and make it a genuine power by the year 2000. Japan will be the key to China's \$350 billion program of national reconstruction.

technological fields. Chinese delegations with long shopping lists are continually scurrying around the Western world seeking everything from oil rigs to computers to advanced weaponry.

Downgrading Mao's Thought

On the home front, the Chinese are being told not to take the once-venenerated "little red book" containing quotations from Chairman Mao too seriously. According to the new official line, the so-called "Thought of Mao" merely represents a philosophical guide to living, not holy writ to be applied chapter-and-verse to each and every specific situation

from digging a ditch to constructing ballistic missiles.

Already it has been discovered that construction workers "inspired" by the prospects of cash bonuses—another "innovation"—are doing their jobs faster than previously, when they were imbued only with Mao's thought.

In education and the arts the winds of change are blowing equally strong. Intellectual life is loosening up. Novelists can actually write simple love stories once again, instead of tired ideological polemics. (The rampaging Red Guards unloosed by Mao in the mid-1960s persecuted and even tortured China's poets and novelists.)

China's new leaders have also launched another ambitious program: This autumn, all of the country's schoolchildren aged 10 and older have begun learning English—perhaps the most dynamic sign that China's days of Maoist isolation and self-reliance are over.

The Chinese revolution is so thorough that Peking is even considering the implementation of a whole new politico-economic system. China's leaders are studying the Yugoslav "self-management" form of communism to see if it could improve worker efficiency.

Japan the Key

One nation more than any other will be the key to China's bold new policy: Japan.

The peace and friendship treaty which China has concluded with Japan virtually guarantees Japanese priority in China's all-out drive for national reconstruction. Noted one Western observer: "Add the vast Japanese scientific and industrial achievements to the important resources of China—its intelligent, industrious, ingenious people, and its immense wealth in unexplored oil, tungsten, coal and other valuable minerals—and there is the potential for a merger of giants."

The new pact is important not only to Peking. By vastly increasing trade between the two Asian giants, the Japanese will gain an expanded market for their exports—a welcome sign in the face of increasing in-



PT Photo

U.S. PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER reviews West German NATO troops during official visit in July 1978. Will American weakness force Germany to abandon the Atlantic Alliance and seek a deal with Moscow in return for German reunification?

dications of protectionism against their goods in the United States and Western Europe.

The weekly *Economist* of Britain, in its August 19, 1978, issue, noted the importance of the new partnership: "It is not unreasonable for the non-Chinese three-quarters of the world to wonder what the Chinese quarter, thus modernised, would mean for it. As the great new Sino-Soviet game of Encircling the Encircled continues—the thought of a China at even Britain's current level of economic development, but 25 times as big, raises all the predictable eyebrows.

"Might a marriage of Chinese diligence and Japanese technology produce a new version of the 'co-prosperity sphere' that really would, this time, dominate the world? Or would Russia march in to stop the nonsense before it happened?"

How Russia Lost Out

In this developing new order in Asia, which ultimately might in-

clude India and other smaller nations, the "odd man out" will definitely be the Soviet Union.

The Russians have only themselves to blame for their plight. With only a little foresight and willingness to compromise on its part, the U.S.S.R. could now be Japan's economic partner instead of China.

For the last two and a half years the Soviets proposed a similar peace and friendship treaty to the Japanese. The core of the pact involved Japan's assistance in developing the hidden riches of Siberia. The Japanese asked only one favor of Moscow: that the Russians return four essentially valueless islands off Hokkaido (Japan's northernmost main island), which they seized at the end of World War II.

The Russians refused—and thereby lost the deal of the century! Joseph C. Harsch, top foreign affairs commentator of the *Christian Science Monitor*, analyzed this remarkable turn of events this way: "Moscow could have won the com-

petition with China easily, had the men of Moscow had the wit and imagination and the political flexibility. Nothing more graphically attests to the clumsiness and slowness of the Russian bear than its failure to see the advantages to itself of having done the deal with Japan, when it had the first chance; and also its failure to see the danger to its own interests of having China obtain Japanese help. . . .

"The United States in 1968 gave back to Japan the Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa. In 1976 the Soviet Union refused to give back the southern Kurils. Thus, for the sake of a few square miles of volcanic forest swept by fog and bone-chilling winds, whose economic value is solely in fishing (mostly for crabs), Moscow missed the chance to enlist Japan as its partner in Asia."

Kremlin Overtures to Bonn

China's sudden aggressiveness is having a predictable reaction in Moscow. And this reaction is the

GERMANY AND RUSSIA:

The Strange Love-Hate Relationship

The prospect of growing cooperation between West Germany and the Soviet Union takes on ominous overtones to anyone with a sense of history.

For nearly 1000 years, relations between Teuton (German) and Slav (Russian) have played an important role in shaping the history of Europe. These relations have generally followed a cyclical pattern—the two great peoples alternately working together to their mutual advantage, or fighting to the death in horrendous wars.

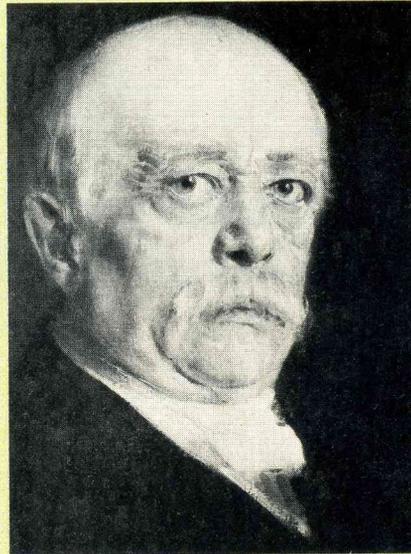
A West German newspaper observed a few years ago that Germany and Russia are “two peoples under the sway of mutual anxiety and admiration.” Another wrote of the strange “psychological affinity between Russia and Germany that has developed through centuries of living as neighbors.” The emigré Russian historian Victor Frank observed that “no other Europeans have been so hated by the Russians and none so loved” as the Germans.

A glimpse at the past 100 years of Russo-German history will illustrate this curious love-hate relationship and its powerful impact on world affairs.

In 1871 the brilliant Prussian statesman Otto von Bismarck united the North German Confederation with the southern German states into a single German Reich under Prussian leadership. King Wilhelm I of Prussia became the Reich's first *kaiser* (emperor), and Bismarck assumed the office of Reich Chancellor. To safeguard the eastern flank of the newly born empire, Bismarck attempted to maintain an alliance with Russia and Austria so that those nations would not form encircling alliances with archrival France.

To this end, Bismarck formed the Three Emperors' League in 1872. The league was composed of Germany, Russia and Austria. The pact relieved Bismarck's fear that Russia might join France in a two-front war against the Reich.

The Three Emperors' League broke up, however, in 1878. The cause was Russia's and Austria's conflicting ambitions in the trouble-plagued Balkan Peninsula. But Bismarck had no intention of allowing a hostile relationship to develop be-



German Information Center

BISMARCK: “Always keep the lines open to St. Petersburg.”

tween his nation and Russia. His famous cardinal rule was: “Always keep the lines open to St. Petersburg.” St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) was the capital of Russia at that time.

Through Bismarck's efforts, a second Three Emperors' League, again composed of Germany, Russia and Austria, was put together in 1881. But, as before, rivalries between Russia and Austria led to its collapse in 1887.

Bismarck hurriedly negotiated a separate treaty with Czar Alexander III in 1887, before Russia had a chance to respond to overtures from France. This so-called Reinsurance Treaty between Germany and Russia—the cornerstone of Bismarck's foreign policy — again secured Germany's eastern flank. It also permitted Germany to continue to grow in military power and have a free hand to deal with problems in the west.

In 1888, a new kaiser assumed the throne in Germany—Wilhelm II. Kaiser Wilhelm forced Bismarck out of office in 1890 and took Germany's foreign affairs into his own hands. He abandoned the time-honored Bismarckian policy of friendship with Russia, allowing the Reinsurance Treaty to lapse. In 1894, Russia allied itself with France—the very thing Bismarck had feared and sought

to avoid. The eventual result: Germany found itself in a two-front conflict with Russia and France in World War I.

On Sunday, April 16, 1922—four years after the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which ended the war between Germany and Russia—a startled Western world received nearly unbelievable news. Representatives of the German Weimar Republic and the fledgling Bolshevik government of Lenin signed on that day a diplomatic and economic pact at the Italian Riviera resort of Rapallo near Genoa. The Rapallo Pact opened full diplomatic relations between the two nations. The two countries mutually renounced war reparations and granted each other preferential trade status.

The power balance in Europe had shifted overnight. The pact also opened up to the German *Reichswehr* (army) the opportunity to secretly design, build, and test in Russia new weapons forbidden to Germany by the humiliating Treaty of Versailles.

But another, and even more stunning, about-face was soon to come.

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. As Hitler was consolidating his power, a period of strident anti-Bolshevism—and therefore anti-Russianism—gripped Germany.

On August 23, 1939, the Nazis abruptly reversed their anti-Soviet policy. On that day, Hitler's foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, secretly flew to Moscow and signed a nonaggression pact with Stalin. The now-infamous pact guaranteed Soviet nonintervention in Hitler's imminent war in the West.

Hitler's eastern flank was now secure. Russia had been neutralized. On September 1, 1939—one week after the signing of the pact—Hitler invaded Poland.

Less than two years later—on June 22, 1941—Hitler did another about-face and invaded the Soviet Union. This abandonment of a policy of friendship with Russia proved disastrous. Two million German soldiers died on the eastern front. Many times more Soviet soldiers and civilians perished in their “Great Patriotic War” against Nazism.

It now appears, however, that time can even heal wounds as deep as these.

—Keith W. Stump

single most important aspect of the changing world power relationship.

The Soviets are fearful—in fact, paranoid—about their shaky eastern flank. As a result Moscow is making renewed efforts to shore up relations in the West—particularly with West Germany.

The government-controlled Soviet press has recently carried a number of articles emphasizing its improved relations with Bonn. In the wake of Soviet Party Chief Leonid Brezhnev's visit to Bonn last May, Soviet television showed a flattering documentary on West Germany.

West Germany is now by far the Soviet Union's biggest capitalist trade partner, well ahead of Japan and the U.S. The momentum is there, furthermore, for vastly increased German-Soviet trade. A report in the *Christian Science Monitor* last May stressed that "West Germany's trade with the Soviet Union is growing by such leaps and bounds that it makes the United States look like a medium-sized power.

"The importance of growing West German-Soviet trade links was underscored with Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev's signing of a 25-year trade pact in Bonn this month. West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt described the new agreement as 'without parallel in the recent history of the world.'"

In a recent interview given to the West German Social Democratic weekly *Vorwärts*, Mr. Brezhnev indicated that trade between the two countries had increased 2½ times between 1973 and 1977, and 5½ times since 1970.

The *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung* has furthermore reported that the Bonn government has prepared a draft program for huge expansion of Soviet-West German trade and industrial cooperation, reaching into the '90s. According to the same source, the Soviet Union's vast development projects are expected to provide jobs for the Federal Republic, which has more than a million unemployed.

Thus, similar to the case with Japan and China, trade worries within

the Western alliance are giving added cause for Bonn's economic *Drang nach Osten* (drive to the east).

Playing on U. S. Weakness

The Soviets have an unwitting ally in their new campaign in the West—the United States. According to the authoritative Evans-Novak Report of July 5, 1978, datelined from Bonn: "The Soviet campaign to cast doubt on the dependability of the United States is in full bloom across Europe, particularly here in West Germany which for 30 years has been the root of the U. S. European

The Kremlin is trying to woo the West Germans, the French, and other Western Europeans away from their economic and military ties to the U.S. The Soviets are playing up to European fears about the fate of the U.S. dollar and America's declining role as defender of the free world.

strategy against Moscow. The smell of this Soviet campaign is everywhere, sweetened with the apprehensions of America's NATO allies as to whether the Carter Administration really knows what it wants and how to get it."

European bankers, economists, and those engaged in foreign trade are thoroughly frustrated with the policies of the current Administration in Washington, its lack of defense of the dollar—the world's reserve currency—and its inability to enact an effective energy program.

Europeans, says the *Christian Science Monitor's* Richard L. Strout,

are witnessing a "deflated President and a deflated dollar." Or, as a columnist for a newspaper in Hannover, West Germany, phrased it: "The Americans are no longer the unquestioned leaders of the West they once were. The dollar is weak and so is the American President."

The deteriorating situation cannot be permitted to go on much longer, say top officials on the continent. Count Otto Lambsdorff, West Germany's minister of economics, told a meeting of journalists in Tokyo in September that "the key to solving the dollar's problem is not in Tokyo or in Bonn but in Washington alone.

"That means it is up to the American Administration to push through an energy conservation program to help stabilize the dollar in the long term."

There is no doubt about it. America's lack of national will and decisiveness is responsible more than anything else for some Europeans questioning the value of the Western alliance—and for beginning to wonder if they should strike a deal with the opposition instead.

A New Rapallo?

There are influential officials in the West German government, admittedly in the minority for now, who openly advocate a far more substantial accommodation with the Soviet Union.

A prime example is Egon Bahr, architect of Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, and now general secretary of the ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD). Herr Bahr spent hours talking with Leonid Brezhnev both in Bonn and on a subsequent trip he made to Moscow in July.

In his discussions with the Soviet president, Bahr did not act as an emissary of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. His ideas, in fact, reflect those of the SPD's activist left wing and conflict with those of Chancellor Schmidt, a confirmed Atlanticist. Nevertheless, as Germany's confidence in the U.S. decreases, Bahr's "radical" approach could become the German policy of the future. According to columnists Evans and Novak: "Here is the specter of what

has always made the Western alliance tremble: a menacing new version of the 1922 Rapallo Soviet-German treaty. Another Rapallo is certainly no possibility in the near future. Indeed, it is unthinkable in Helmut Schmidt's Germany.

"Nevertheless, what is clearly at issue in the Brezhnev-Bahr talks is chilling, even though no immediate threat: West Germany leaving NATO with Soviet guarantees against aggression and with the ultimate prospect of German reunification. Bahr, a fanatical German nationalist, leads SPD's far-left faction which believes the key to Germany's future reunification is held in Moscow, not Washington."

Bahr has emphatically denied doing more than seriously thinking about West Germany leaving the Atlantic alliance. (A defector from Communist Romania charged in September that Bahr actually had drafted a plan for such action.) Bahr adds that in the present circumstances West Germany would be foolish to pursue an independent course.

The United States government has been very concerned about even the inkling of a change in Bonn's foreign policy toward Moscow. President Carter's National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski has gone so far as to warn Bonn against pursuing a policy of what he called "self-Finlandization." This term presumably means the willingness of Bonn to submit every foreign policy move to Moscow for prior approval.

"Amicable Partner" of Soviets: Strauss

Thoughts about increased cooperation with the Soviets are not limited to Germany's Socialist far left. Even Franz-Josef Strauss, the powerful leader of the Bavarian wing of the political opposition—and an avowed anti-Communist—has spoken some very remarkable words about German-Soviet relations in the future.

When Leonid Brezhnev visited Bonn in May he had a 45-minute conversation with Herr Strauss (as he also did with Christian Democratic Union opposition leader Helmut Kohl).

What struck reporters at Gymnich Castle outside Bonn, Brezhnev's guest residence, was the unusual cordiality between Brezhnev and Strauss, whom the Soviet press has hammered unceasingly for nearly twenty years. But what really raised eyebrows was that Brezhnev, visibly ailing, accompanied Strauss to his car parked 150 feet away and told him, "I thank you for the open and amicable conversation." Strauss returned the thanks.

What had these two powerful leaders discussed? Herr Strauss told reporters he told the Soviet chief that while it was not his or Germany's goal to turn the defeat of the Second World War into victory, "nobody can demand of us to believe in two German nations."

Later, in a speech to the Bundestag (West Germany's parliament), touching on his conversation with Brezhnev, Strauss reiterated that "there is only one German nation." If only the Soviets, he said, would alter their attitudes and policies toward Germany, Germany would respond in like manner.

Regarding reunification of the two German states, Strauss held out to Moscow the benefits which it could expect from finally permitting such a union. "A justly treated free German nation," he said, "will be a grateful, amicable partner."

Then Strauss remarked, in words packed with import: "When Russians and Germans stood against one another, permitted themselves to get involved in wars against each other, or started wars, it was a tremendous disaster for both peoples. And when the contrary condition existed, it was fortunate for both peoples. And, if to this condition would be added genuine partnership and just mutual recognition of the national rights of existence, *a true spring would break forth in Europe and in the world.*"

Not Germany Alone

There is no doubt that Germany is firmly committed to its relationship with its West European partners. Bonn has been squarely in the forefront in efforts toward a united Europe. The Federal Republic is the

very heart and core of the Common Market. Germany (along with France) is the leading advocate of establishing a powerful new monetary union for Western Europe.

All of this will not be abandoned should Bonn decide to open its options to the East. What *is* likely to happen is that all of Western Europe—eventually a unified Europe—will move with Germany in an easterly direction, as rapidly as relations with America deteriorate.

More than any other factor—even intense pressure from Moscow—it will be West Europe's declining trust in Washington's reliability that will determine the shape and speed of changes to come in Europe.

End-Time Alignment of Nations

An entirely new international order is on the brink of reality. And when it matures, the end of man's 6,000 years of rule apart from God will be almost over. The dawning of the Kingdom of God—which will usher in world peace—will be just over the horizon.

In Asia, what is emerging, it would appear, is a powerful axis between China and Japan, possibly including India—an awesome economic and military alliance, from which could arise, according to Bible prophecy, an incredible army of 200 million people! (Rev. 9:16.)

In Europe, a ten-nation European bloc (Rev. 17:12-13), with Germany (very possibly a *united* Germany) playing a key role, might be compelled to make temporary peace with Soviet Russia before the two blocs, East and West, have a nuclear falling-out.

And the United States? It will have already, by that time, suffered calamitous national destruction!

How do the editors of *The Plain Truth* know? Write for our key prophetic booklet, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last*, and find out!

And be sure to read Mr. Armstrong's "The United States and Britain in Prophecy," now being serialized in *The Plain Truth*.

You *can* know what the future holds—and how to escape the perilous days ahead. □

WHY NOT PEACE ON EARTH?

“And on earth peace, good will toward men.” This is one of the most oft-quoted scriptures, particularly at this season of the year. A prayer of hope. A ray of light in a dark world. And, unfortunately, a so far unfulfilled promise!

The scripture applies to Christ, the Prince of Peace, and is more correctly rendered, “. . . peace on earth toward men of goodwill.” The dove of peace is a weary and wary bird, endlessly searching throughout blood-soaked history for a resting place and finding none. There will be no peace until King Christ personally rules all earth in His Kingdom soon to come.

Peace is ever elusive. Men speak peace and make war. Peace treaties are for the purpose of giving men time to gather strength for the next war—and are of themselves all too often the very *cause* of the next war!

We forget the prophet’s stern warning to beware of those who say, “Peace, peace!” when there is *no* peace (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). We forget the repeated maxim: “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa. 57:21). We forget that Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34). We forget that one of the main signs that heralds the returning Christ is “wars and rumours of wars” (Matt. 24:6)—which sign, if we look around today’s world, we see fulfilled to its greatest extent in history! We forget the blood-drenched prophecies of the book of Revelation which culminate in that horrible word “Armageddon”—all of which must come to pass *before* the Prince brings peace to earth!

Why do we have wars? The answer is given very plainly by James: “Isn’t it because there is a whole army of evil desires within you? You want what you don’t have, so you kill to get it. You long for what others have, and can’t afford it, so you start a fight to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don’t have what you want is that you don’t ask God for it. And even when you do ask you don’t get it because your whole aim is wrong—you want only what will give *you* pleasure” (James 4:1-3, *The Living Bible*).

As long as there is even *one* group of men left on earth who covets what some other group has, we will continue to have wars. When one person within a society exercises this lustful desire, it is called a *crime*;

when one society exercises that desire against another society, it is called a “*just war*”! Just war—that’s all!

Let’s take a very brief look around this war-crazy world of ours.

The Soviets want to bring the entire world under their domination and will go to any lengths to achieve that goal: they want what everyone else has. The U.S. wants “peace” because it already has more than any other nation and wants to keep it and enjoy it. The Palestinians want the land which the Jews now have and are openly determined to *take* it—and beyond that, many among them will not be satisfied by simply taking but will not rest until the last Israeli has been “pushed into the sea”!

The Chinese want what the Soviets have because proportionately they have more than the Chinese; but the Soviets want “peace” with their renegade Red brothers because they want to keep what they have (and get more) and enjoy it!

The blacks of Africa want “freedom” from the colonial power left to whites because they want what someone else has developed on their land. The whites want “peace” because they want to keep what they have and enjoy it. And sadly, those blacks who have achieved “freedom” are living under some of the bloodiest, cruelest, most dominating dictatorships known to mankind.

Even the “liberals” are making sounds of concern. George McGovern, onetime candidate for President of the United States, has called for a U.N. expeditionary force to put a stop to the “holocaust in Cambodia.” Too little too late. And what about the twenty million or more who perished in the purges which put Stalin in control of the Soviet “Union”? Or what about the more than thirty million Chinese who were executed to make China safe for communism?

It is not a peaceful world—and it will get increasingly less so with each passing year.

But you can achieve peace as an individual, even in the midst of a war-torn world. Christ’s peace is available now to all who seek it—and will be available to all mankind when He comes to establish His Kingdom, after the many wars yet to come.

Please make your individual choice of peace on earth! Why not? □



Today many religionists are demanding, in the name of God, that governments should “soak the rich.” Many say that God loves only the poor and hates the prosperous. Is God really on the “side” of the poor? Is He a Communist who has taken sides in the “class struggle”? Here’s the astonishing truth about what the Bible really says about wealth and poverty!

WHAT’S WRONG WITH PROSPERITY?

by Jeff Calkins



“Christianity is a religion of the poor, of the proletariat, of the exploited class,” proclaims a recent issue of a prominent “radical Christian” periodical.

Other writers take much the same line. “God is on the side of the poor,” declares Peter Davids in a recent issue of *Sojourners*, an evangelical publication.

In recent years many religionists have hopped aboard the God-hates-

the-rich bandwagon. And by rich, it seems they do not mean just John D. Rockefeller or J. Paul Getty. They appear to include the average middle-class person in the Western world who enjoys such “luxuries” as owning his own home or renting a quality apartment, living in clean surroundings, having a car to drive, and maybe a savings account. According to the radical Christians, God is angry at those who aren’t

dirt poor. God, they believe, is the “God of the poor” who is “working in history” to “liberate” the poor from oppression.

A person supposedly oppresses the poor if he enjoys a high standard of living. Radical Christians are forever pointing out that the United States, for example, consumes about a third of the world’s resources, yet accounts for only six percent of the world’s population.

This fact supposedly indicts Americans as “oppressors.” (What they forget is that “resources” don’t do anyone any good until they are developed into usable wealth, and the fact is that the U.S. and other Western societies *produce* more wealth than they consume, and share the balance with poorer countries.)

So-called liberation theology takes the idea from the Bible that God loves the poor and oppressed (which is true) and combines it with the idea of Karl Marx that any time a man sells his labor to another there is “exploitation” (which is false).

Thus, according to this reasoning, God hates oppressors—who turn out, because liberation theologians have bought wholesale the economic theories of Marx, to be anyone who employs someone else. Karl Marx taught that industrial societies are divided into two classes, the workers and the middle class (though today, much to the consternation of Marxists, many workers have become middle-class). Thus liberation theologians conclude that because God and Christ *do* have some kind words in the Bible for the poor and some harsh words for their oppressors, He must therefore hate those—the middle and upper classes—who have acquired wealth, or capital, in this world.

Ignoring the Kingdom of God

According to the radical Christian view, God, because He is concerned about needy people, has taken sides in the “class struggle.” Thus God is supposed to condemn all accumulation of property. He requires that those who have the means should give up *all* their possessions and become poor. He even counsels violence in order to “liberate” the poor.

Many of these radical Christians say God is the “Lord of history.” He is supposed to be “at work in history casting down the rich and exalting the poor.” God is “not neutral in the struggle for justice.”

The above view is radical to be sure—but it is definitely not Christian. In the first place, God is not taking sides in man’s affairs in the way most people, including professing Christians, think. Satan—not God—is the ruler of this world, this

age (II Cor. 4:4). The world to come—the Kingdom of God—is God’s world. God’s primary work now is preparing the groundwork for the restoration of the government of God (Mark 1:14-15). (Write for our free booklet *What Do You Mean—The Kingdom of God?*)

God is not working in history—as radical Christians use the words—to “liberate” the poor. What they seem to imply is that God is working through the Communist party or other radical groups. This is why the Marxist groups in Rhodesia, for example, are treated favorably. Such groups are seen as the voice of the poor rising against their oppressors. Along the same lines, radical theologian Robert McAfee Brown once made the very revealing comment that “confronted with a choice of supporting the [Communist] Castro regime in Cuba or the [non-Communist] Pinochet regime in Chile,” he would quickly choose Cuba because it is a country where “the poor” have their “basic needs” met. It is, of course, true that if Communist regimes *say* they have any purpose for their existence, it is to meet the basic needs of the poor, even if human liberty must be crushed (as it has in Cuba) in the process.

The Bible, however, gives a different picture.

The real salvation of the poor is the Kingdom of God which Jesus Christ will establish on earth at His return. Christ warned that in this “present evil world” (Gal. 1:4) the “poor always ye have with you” (John 12:8).

The Passion for Equality

The reason why some religious people actually want to use violence to overthrow free-market economic systems or, at the very least, cajole governments to adopt soak-the-rich policies is because of a zealous belief in equality. No one, they believe, should have more than anyone else: “No Christian should prosper while others suffer.”

The attitude is similar to the one noted by Alexis de Tocqueville, a famous French writer (1805-1859), who said that some people would rather be “equal in slavery than unequal in freedom.” The scripture which is used to bolster this belief is

II Corinthians 8:13-15: “For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.”

But this scripture upholds equality only in the sense of God’s equal compassion for all human beings. The context is the apostle Paul’s appeal for *famine relief*. The equality that is being spoken of is an equality in the basic necessities of life: Paul is saying that he did not want any of the members of the Church of God at Jerusalem, for whom the famine relief was intended, to starve. The value here is compassion, not the “equality of result” which so many advocate today.

The truth is, God values equality for its own sake far less than most people realize. He places much greater emphasis upon spiritual maturity combined with responsible concern for others. This is clearly revealed in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). In the parable, Christ likens Himself to a man who goes off to travel and first entrusts his assets to his servants. Some servants are given more responsibility, some less; each servant is apportioned “according to his several ability” (Matt. 25:15). There is no equality in how the assets are divided: It is according to “ability.” Afterwards, the man returns and demands to know how each of the servants has done in managing what was entrusted to him.

Again there is inequality. Two servants have done well; one has done poorly. But instead of equalizing the shares, Christ gives the one talent of the servant who did not develop or increase his talent to the servant who increased his share the most numerically—even though he and the other faithful servant both increased their shares the same proportionally.

The lesson, of course, is that God expects those with ability and talent to diligently use what they have been given.

While this parable primarily re-

fers to our spiritual service to God—something God does not measure “equally”—it also certainly shows that there is no divine preference for equality for its own sake.

The fact is that God does not choose sides in the “class struggle.” Those who seek to make it sound as if God only loves the poor—and loves the poor *because* they are poor, not because they are the descendants of Adam and potential sons of God—almost never quote the injunction in Exodus 23:3: “Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.” Neither do they mention Leviticus 19:15: “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty.” A poor man, according to these verses, shouldn’t get special treatment simply because he is poor. His economic status should have nothing to do with justice. This point is reiterated by the apostle Peter, who stated that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34).

Christian Violence?

Those who believe in the radical theology have very little hesitation about using violence to overthrow “oppressive governments.” They believe that because they are on the side of the poor, violence is justified. Should they succeed in coming to power, they leave little doubt as to what they would do. They would have the government confiscate the earnings and wealth of the middle and upper classes. *And they would do so in God’s name!*

But they would be wrong to use the authority of Scripture for what is really just baptized Communism! The Bible teaches that when those who have money or wealth provide for or give to the poor, they should be doing so individually out of genuine concern and love, not because the government tax collector is threatening them with jail terms. As the apostle Paul said about giving, it should be “every man according as he purposeth in his heart . . . not grudgingly, or of necessity” (II Cor. 9:7).

But What About the Poor?

One of the radical Christians puts it very simply: “The Bible regards

poverty in the midst of plenty as sin.” Another says, “The idea of individuals within the community of faith accumulating wealth while others suffer need is abhorrent to the biblical authors.” The implication is that as long as there are poor people around, none of the others should ever enjoy plenty, or quality goods, or anything more than just the bare necessities of life.

But this view is not biblical! The Bible has many kind and compassionate words for the poor—but only the poor whose poverty is no fault of their own. Their poverty is



The Bible teaches that there is nothing wrong with working hard and earning wealth in a good, honest manner.

the result of dependency, or circumstances beyond the individual’s control. This is the poverty which is suffered by widows and orphans, the sick and disabled, the aged. Here the Bible is clear: Christians are obligated to compassionately assist these unfortunate individuals, even to the point of sacrifice. The relief of such human distress is one of the fundamentals of true religion. There is, indeed, a duty to give to the poor when you have the means to do so.

But there is another class of poor persons that the Bible speaks of. As harsh as it may sound, *some* people are poor through their own fault. To

be blunt, *some* people are poor because of laziness. The Bible makes this very clear:

“He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand” (Prov. 10:4).

“The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets [that is, he makes excuses for not working]” (Prov. 22:13).

“He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster” (Prov. 18:9).

“I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down” (Prov. 24:30-31).

This last proverb is particularly appropriate to the poverty of many urban slums. Unless people are willing to expend the effort to care for their property, it soon deteriorates. Consider the almost proverbial case of the slum family which is moved by a city redevelopment agency to a nice middle-class suburb and within a short time has allowed their new quarters to get into a run-down, dilapidated condition. It is because they are unwilling to take care of what they have!

Pleasure Before Work

For many people, the inability to restrain themselves from giving in to the pleasures of the moment is the cause of poverty. This fact is vividly brought out in *The Unheavenly City*, a book by a Harvard professor of urban studies, Edward Banfield. Dr. Banfield documented what Solomon had first recorded in the Bible—that plain old laziness, and the inability to control one’s emotions and desires, is the reason why many people live in slum conditions.

Dr. Banfield shows that in many big-city slums, poverty is the direct result of an inability to defer gratification, even for a short period of time. Some people simply cannot deny themselves the pleasures of the moment in order to break out of their impoverished condition. Such a person, says Banfield, lives “from moment to moment. If he has any awareness of the future, it is of something fixed, fated, beyond his control. . . . Impulse governs his behavior . . . he cannot discipline him-

self to sacrifice a present for a future satisfaction . . . whatever he cannot consume immediately he considers valueless. His bodily needs (especially for sex) and his taste for 'action' take precedence over everything else—and certainly over any work routine." Indeed, as Solomon said, "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man" (Prov. 21:17).

In the New Testament, too, some people's poverty is also laid at the door of laziness. The apostle Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, scolded "busybodies" who had quit their jobs and were sponging off others, waiting for the return of Christ (II Thess. 3:11-12). Paul laid down this rule, applicable to every able-bodied Christian: "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (II Thess. 3:10).

Elsewhere, Paul told the evangelist Timothy that a man who does not put forth the effort to provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, "hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Tim. 5:8).

Of course, there *are* many poor people in the world whose poverty is no fault of their own, and the Bible also speaks eloquently to their condition. It is injustice when people who have superior learning take advantage of the poor in contracts (Amos 8:6). It is an abomination to God when poor people who are not lazy are not cared for (Ezek. 16:49). And the Bible emphatically teaches that employers have a duty to show love and concern for their employees, particularly their less-educated, or feeble-minded employees.

The central concern in all of these scriptures, however, is always compassion—the humane concern that human beings should not suffer lack of food or shelter due to conditions beyond their control. But the Bible does not countenance the belief, founded more on envy than on godly love, that individuals who work hard and do well should have everything they earn stripped away from them lest they enjoy more than the poor.

Hard Work vs. Fraud

There is nothing wrong in acquiring wealth through your own honest effort—exchanging something you do

for money, or using your mind to invest money you already have. There is nothing wrong with acquiring wealth through gifts, such as an inheritance.

In other words, there are two ways in which a man can acquire property justly. He can exchange it for something else, such as his own labor, or he can have it given to him. Both ways are found in the Bible. Jesus said, "The labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7). Gift giving is certainly not condemned: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

Moreover, there is nothing wrong with wealth *in and of itself*. The Old Testament shows clearly that "blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. . . . *Wealth* and riches shall be in his house" (Ps. 112:1-3).

Other scriptures show the same thing:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. . . . whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1:1-3).

"And the Eternal was with Joseph, and he was a *prosperous* man. . . . the Eternal made all that he did to *prosper* in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him [God]" (Gen. 39:2-4).

"The righteous shall *flourish* like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon" (Ps. 92:12).

Finally, some of the most righteous men of the Bible were not only middle-class, but really rich. Abraham had over 318 servants (Gen. 14:14). After his trial, Job was given twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10), and he was quite wealthy to begin with (Job 1:3).

The New Testament likewise shows that there is nothing wrong with wealth in and of itself:

"I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health" (III John 2). Jesus Himself said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The Bible teaches that there is nothing wrong with working hard and acquiring wealth in a good, honest manner:

"The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Prov. 13:4).

"The substance of a diligent man is precious" (Prov. 12:27).

"The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness" (Prov. 21:5).

"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not forever" (Prov. 27:23-24).

The fact of the matter is that God has set the laws of success in motion. Some people put these laws to work in their lives, and, after payment of God's tithe, offerings, and basic charity to relieve those who are truly needy, they deserve to keep what they have. (You can learn about these laws by writing for our free booklet *The Seven Laws of Success*.)

As the editor of *The Plain Truth*, Herbert W. Armstrong, pointed out more than a quarter century ago, prosperity and the enjoyment of high-quality consumer goods is the reward of good, hard work (*The Plain Truth*, October 1951).

"What would happen," asked Mr. Armstrong, "if there were not a few leaders who had taken life seriously when they were young, who had spent their evenings in study and self-improvement while the majority were out seeking pleasure and good times, who had made the most of their opportunities, who had vision and enterprise, who slaved and worked long hours during hard years, planning and building a business which now provides employment for others—who spent sleepless nights carrying all the worry and responsibility of the enterprise so they could meet the payrolls, while those on the payrolls had their good times and got their sleep without any load of responsibility?"

Seek God First

While the Bible does say that it is possible to be prosperous without incurring God's wrath, it does command us not to put our *heart* in material goods. The true basis of happiness is indeed not material but spiritual.

While wealth can be legitimately earned, we must not forget that the Bible clearly commands us not to seek riches as a goal. Christ said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33). The apostle Paul did say that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil" (I Tim. 6:9-10).

And we must not forget that the Bible absolutely condemns the acquisition of wealth or prosperity by ungodly means, i.e., by force or fraud. The apostle James shows what God thinks of those who unfairly take advantage and defraud the poor: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, *which is of you kept back by fraud*, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth" (James 5:1-4).

David confronted the problem of those who became rich by unjust means. But he realized that God, who wields final justice, would chasten them in the end: "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. . . Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. . . all the day long have I been plagued. . . Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou . . . castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors" (Ps. 73:3, 12, 14, 17-19).

The Right Use of Wealth

Clearly the Bible teaches that prosperity is not an end in itself. To demonstrate this, Jesus spoke a very poignant parable about a rich man who accumulated goods, then tore down his barns to have room to

store still more goods. He was a fool, Jesus said, because he died before he ever got a chance to enjoy the goods himself. The lesson was that we should "take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

This basic truth was driven home by Christ in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31) and was also expressed by Solomon when he said: "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners



But the Bible also tells us not to put our heart in material goods. The basis of happiness is spiritual, not material.

thereof to their hurt" (Eccl. 5:13).

The right use of wealth is indeed compassionate. It should be used to preach the gospel (I Cor. 9:6-7, 14); to support the work of the true ministry of Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:5, 11-17); to celebrate the feasts of God (Deut. 14:22-26) and to help others to do so (Deut. 14:27); to relieve the distress of those who are poor through no fault of their own (I John 3:17, James 2:14-17). The right attitude toward wealth was expressed eloquently by Paul when he told the Ephesians: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands

the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28).

But after all of this, God lays no burden on the Christian to give up *all* his wealth for the sake of equality. There is a right place for material possessions in God's way of life: "Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; *this is the gift of God*" (Eccl. 5:18-19).

The principle is one of right balance on material wealth. On the one extreme, wealth is *not* to be sought for its own sake: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver" (Eccl. 5:10). On the other hand, we do not have to be joyless ascetics either; for "it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour."

The World Tomorrow

In God's world, individuals will be able to enjoy the fruit of their own labor: "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Isa. 25:6).

God's economic plan as revealed in Exodus and Leviticus shows that private property is a sacred right, as revealed by the commandment against theft (Ex. 20:15). The "means of production" will be in private hands. However, the harsh aspects of unrestricted capitalism will not be allowed. In fact, God's "welfare system" is remarkable for being both humane *and* at the same time preserving private incentive.

Arable land will be divided up among families and will not be allowed to be sold for more than fifty years (Lev. 25:23). Every seventh year all consumer debts will be abolished. A "third-tithe" system will be established to relieve the distress of the needy: but this system will cost *only a fraction* of what
(Continued on page 44)

“THESE ARE THE APPOINTED FEASTS...”

In the beginning God had a plan. That plan is still being worked out under the active leadership of Jesus Christ. Each year, the Church of God pictures the divine plan of salvation by the observance of seven annual holy days.

by Brian Knowles
and John R. Schroeder

Writing to the Church of God at Ephesus, the apostle Paul said: “For he [God] has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his *purpose* which he set forth in Christ *as a plan* for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:9-10, RSV).

God has a master plan!

And that plan is being carried out under the active leadership of Jesus Christ, who is called “the captain of [our] salvation” (Heb. 2:10). He is, in a sense, the “executive director” of the plan of salvation. He is actively carrying out the purpose and will of God the Father with whom that plan originated.

The divine plan involves the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth and the subjection of all things to Christ’s government. When this is accomplished Jesus Christ will turn the completed package over to His Father: “Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying [from the Greek *kaeargto*, meaning “to render powerless”] every rule and every authority and power” (I Cor. 15:24).

The Sabbath in the Plan of God

But that’s the end—the outcome—of the divine plan. We’re getting ahead of the story. After God initially created the material universe and then later refashioned it, the Creator placed man in the Garden of Eden and gave him the Sabbath day (Gen. 2:1-3; Mark 2:27). The Sab-

bath was a memorial of the creation—the first step in the plan of salvation.

So we have the weekly Sabbath as a reminder that God is Creator and that He has a plan which He is working out here below. The initial step in that divine scheme is depicted each time Christians observe the Sabbath day. (You might write for our free booklet *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*)

The events that immediately follow the creation of the Sabbath are also significant in terms of God’s plan. What was the next event recorded immediately following creation? Once God had refurbished the earth and placed man on it, what happened?

Sin!

The very next event discussed in the Genesis account is the occurrence of the first human sin. You’ll find it in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve, at the tempting of the serpent who was actually the devil, violated the command not to eat of the tree which was located in the midst of Eden. Our first parents then were faced with the death penalty (Gen. 3:3; Rom. 6:23).

But God is not the God of the dead but of the living! Dead people can have no part in the Kingdom of God, so a solution had to be found for the problem of sin. Adam and Eve were the prototypes of all humanity to follow. As they went, so went the world: “Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned . . .” (Rom. 5:12). Sin is

absolutely universal in the human realm: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23; see also I John 1:8, 10). Somehow the people of God had to be *saved* from the consequences of sin.

The Passover

God’s principal act of salvation for all mankind was prefigured in the greatest single event in ancient Israel’s history—the Passover. The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for some four centuries. To a large extent they had absorbed Egypt’s paganism and morally degenerate way of life. Egypt is used in the Bible as a type of sin (Rev. 11:8). Had it not been for God’s merciful graciousness the children of Israel would have died in sin (Egypt).

But God devised a means by which they could achieve *physical* salvation from Egypt. The whole procedure is explained in Exodus 12: “The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ‘This month shall be for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month they shall take every man a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household. . . . Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old; you shall take it from the sheep or from the goats; and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs in the evening [Hebrew, “between the two evenings”]. . . . They shall eat the flesh

that night, roasted; with unleavened bread. . . . you shall eat it in haste. *It is the Lord's passover.* For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. . . . The blood shall be a sign for you, upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt'” (Ex. 12:1-13).

There is much to learn from the symbolism of the Passover service. Jesus Himself is called “the Lamb of God” in the New Testament (John 1:29, 36; Rev. 5:6, 12, 13). Paul, speaking of Jesus, wrote: “For Christ, our paschal [Passover] lamb, has been sacrificed” (I Cor. 5:7).

It is obvious then that the Passover service of ancient Israel was intended to depict the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which was to occur many centuries in the future. Just as the blood of the Passover lamb was shed on behalf of the sinful children of Israel, so the blood of Christ was shed for all of mankind. Those who came under the blood of the Passover lamb—that is, had it smeared on their doorposts—were exempted from divine wrath. Today, Christians are “bought with a price”—the blood of Christ (I Cor. 6:20; Acts 20:28).

Those of us who come under the blood of Christ will also escape divine wrath. “For the wages of sin is death, but the free *gift* of God is eternal life” (Rom. 6:23). It is by God's grace that Christians may claim the blood of Christ. It is through faith in that blood that we are justified, though we are all sinners.

Read carefully Romans 3:23-26, which explains how this justification comes through faith in the blood sacrifice of the Son of God. God passes over our guilt and forgives us because Jesus paid the death penalty in our stead. Through Christ, and His sacrifice, we are regarded as “righteous” before God.

Each year the Church of God observes the Passover to symbolize and renew the covenant made by each Christian with God at the time of baptism. Each year we are reminded of our need for faith in

Christ's sacrifice—the *only* means by which we can be justified in the face of our own sinfulness.

Jesus' Instruction

The “Lord's Supper” or “the Last Supper” which Jesus ate with His disciples was actually a Passover meal. Just as God rested on the Sabbath day, not because He was tired but to set an example, so Jesus kept the Passover to set an example for the Church. He Himself had no need of redemption since He had *never sinned* (Heb. 4:15).

But He did eat the Passover meal and changed the symbols for the sake of the practice of the Church. “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant [some manuscripts contain the word “new”], which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (Matt. 26:26-28).

All of this was in the context of the Passover meal (verses 17-19).

Paul's Instruction

The apostle Paul showed that this practice of taking bread and wine to symbolize the body and blood of Christ was to continue in the Church throughout the ages. Speaking of the above-mentioned events, he wrote to the congregation at Corinth: “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. *Do this in remembrance of me.*’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. *Do this,* as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes” (I Cor. 11:23-26).

The service of the bread and wine is celebrated *annually* since the Passover occurred only once a year.

Unleavened bread is used because that is what was used at the Passover service (Ex. 12:8). Wine, rather than grape juice, is also used since it is obvious that “the fruit of the vine” was fermented. In Paul's day some were *abusing* the Passover service, some eating a full meal, some actually getting *drunk* on the Passover wine (I Cor. 11:17-21). [Editor's note: The Bible nowhere condemns drinking of alcoholic beverages *per se*. In fact, there are occasions where the use of alcohol is actually encouraged (see Deuteronomy 14:26, I Timothy 5:23). But *drunkenness* is absolutely forbidden. No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven (I Cor. 6:10). For more on this subject, request our free reprints “Alcoholism—A Worldwide Curse” and “Is Drinking a Sin?”]

Foot-washing Service

In addition to the bread and wine service, Jesus, immediately following the Passover meal, also instituted the foot-washing service, an ordinance of humility (John 13).

For the modern Church of God the annual Passover observance has deep meaning. It is the most solemn occasion of the year. Each member is encouraged to examine himself and remember the high price which was paid to redeem each of us. Passages from the Gospel accounts are read, and the men and women go separately to the foot-washing service before returning for the remainder of the meeting.

Jesus commanded the Church to *continue* to practice the New Testament Passover. The apostle Paul confirmed the necessity of it. And today's Church observes this biblically sanctioned ordinance in the spring of each year, because it is the *Lord's* Passover!

Just as the weekly Sabbath depicts and commemorates God's act of creation which commenced the plan of salvation, so the annual Passover service pictures God's next vital act in that plan. Since sin entered the world by Adam, the “second Adam” (Christ—I Cor. 15:45) offered Himself in sacrifice for the sins of the first—and for all of his descendants: “. . . so one man's act

of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men" (Rom. 5:18). "Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God" (Rom. 5:9).

The Days of Unleavened Bread

The book of Acts chronicles a short history of the early Church. In Acts 12:1-4, Luke wrote about the martyrdom of James and the imprisonment of Peter. To time these events, he added: "This was during the *days of Unleavened Bread*" (verse 3).

So Luke, the Gentile physician, was aware that this annual festival continued to be observed in the early New Testament Church.

Similarly, he wrote in Acts 20:4-6 that several of Paul's assistants and fellow ministers "went on and were waiting for us at Troas, but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread. . . ."

But what do these days signify for the modern Christian? Are they up to date in the twentieth century? Do they have poignant meaning in the plan of salvation?

Notice, first of all, that the Days of Unleavened Bread *follow immediately* on the heels of the Passover. Note the biblical record in Leviticus—the third book of Moses. "And on the fifteenth day [following the Passover on the fourteenth, see Leviticus 23:5] of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread to the Lord; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation [commanded assembly]. . . . on the seventh day is a holy convocation. . . ." (Lev. 23:6-8).

Some few observe the beginning of God's festivals by keeping the Passover (or Lord's Supper), but never go on to an in-depth understanding of God's plan by celebrating *the other* annual holy days and festivals. But Christ is the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning *and the end!* We must understand His *entire* master plan!

In the twelfth chapter of the book of Hebrews we are told to "run with perseverance *the race* that is set before us" (verse 1). So the Christian life is reckoned as a footrace with a

starting gate and a tape at the finish line.

The account continues in verse 2: ". . . looking to Jesus *the pioneer and perfecter* [*the author and finisher,*" KJV] of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross . . . and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus Christ—Our High Priest.

It has been said—and with much accuracy—that Hebrews is the book of the priesthood. Jesus Christ is our High Priest in heaven. His Passover sacrifice pictures the complete, total forgiveness of past sins. But unfortunately, the typical Christian finds himself (or herself) still involved in the struggle against sin throughout his natural life. It was not "all over long ago" after initial repentance and water baptism.

The Christian must endeavor to put sin out of his life. But he soon discovers that he has embarked on no easy task. On occasion the Christian finds himself once again the abject slave to some sin or bad habit. He is unable to overthrow sin all at once. Frankly, it takes a lifetime to overcome some of our stubborn weaknesses.

Forgiveness of past sins is poignantly pictured by the Passover festival. Totally putting away sin (symbolized by the Days of Unleavened Bread) fills in the picture begun by the Passover. Leaven is a symbol of sin. And the command to remove leaven from our houses and to eat only unleavened bread for seven days impresses upon us the importance of a complete spiritual housecleaning (Ex. 12:19-20; I Cor. 5:7-8). This has been called "our part in God's master plan."

But make no mistake about it. The Christian cannot put sin out of his life *by himself*—without the help of his living Savior, Jesus Christ. Even the new babe in Christ soon discovers his utter helplessness. Sin is a master that doesn't relinquish its hold without a tough, grueling fight. Like all the other steps in God's plan of salvation, this one too requires the hand of God.

This is where Jesus comes in as our High Priest. The book of Hebrews

explains: "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast *our confession* [the Christian life]. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who *in every respect* has been tempted as we are, *yet without sin*. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16).

Putting sin out of our lives would be utterly impossible without this kind of help. Jesus is *totally committed* to those who continue in the race. We are *not alone* in our struggle against sin! He said: "I am with you *always*, to the close of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Jesus "will sustain you to the end, *guiltless* ["blameless," KJV] in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1:8).

Paul, in his salutation to the Philippian brethren, wrote: "[I am] thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure that he *who began* a good work in you [by the forgiveness of their sins through Christ's Passover sacrifice] *will bring it to completion* at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:5-6).

Even the prophet David wrote: "*The Lord will perfect* that which concerneth me" (Ps. 138:8, KJV). Remember, Christ is the *pioneer* and [the] *perfecter* of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). We are saved *by His life* as our High Priest (Rom. 5:10).

Christians Must Expel Sin

Yet, we must put forth *our own efforts!* Says the book of Hebrews: ". . . let us also *lay aside* every weight, *and sin which clings so closely*, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). Continue in verses 3-4: "Consider him [Jesus Christ] who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood [as Christ did]."

The apostle Paul wrote: "Every
(Continued on page 38)

ICON SUPREME?

THE SHROUD OF TURIN

by Lawson Briggs

I hope you understand," said a current editor of *Scientific American*, "that [our magazine] is under new ownership now, and we certainly wouldn't have published that article today. It was nonsense."

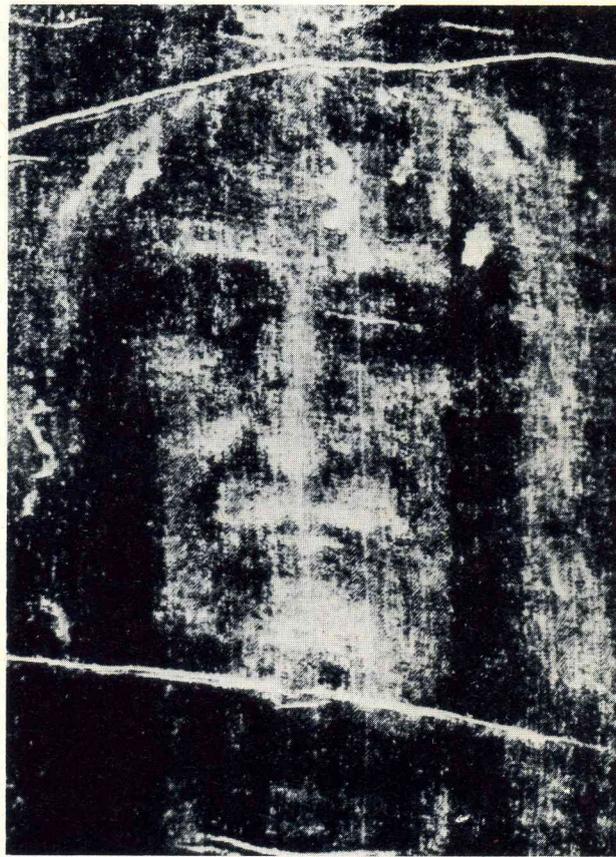
He was referring to *Scientific American's* March 1937 article on the shroud of Turin, believed by many to be the very cloth which covered the body of Christ after it was taken down from the cross.

Opinions are very heated and dogmatic on the subject of the shroud. Is it a miracle? A hoax? Is it genuine? Among the religious, Protestants in general have tended to voice skepticism; modern Catholics, belief. Secular scholars, following their own dogma of demanding proof rather than mere speculation, have almost unanimously judged it a religious hoax.

But Robert Wilcox, former religion editor of the *Miami News*, came to the conclusion the relic is genuine. In 1977 his book *Shroud* stirred anew the centuries-old authenticity debate.

In the Beginning?

Curiously enough, it was a Roman Catholic bishop who first branded the shroud a fraud. When, in the year 1356, the fourteen-by-three-and-a-half-foot piece of linen was exhibited at the obscure church of Lirey in central



France—the first known historical record of its existence—it quickly became the subject of a lengthy memorandum to the Pope from Henry of Arcis, bishop of Troyes. Bishop Henry alleged that the Lirey canons had “falsely and deceitfully, being consumed with the passion of avarice and not from any motive of devotion but only of gain, procured for their church a certain cloth cunningly painted, upon which by clever sleight of hand was depicted the twofold image of one man, that is to say the back and the front, they falsely declaring and pretending that this was the actual shroud in which our Saviour Jesus Christ was enfolded in the tomb.”

The actual painter, he went on, had been discovered by one of his predecessors and, being summoned to the bishop's presence, had candidly admitted the

painting to be “a work of human skill and not miraculously wrought or bestowed” (Ian Wilson, *The Turin Shroud*, p. 230).

To be fair, however, it is necessary to state that modern investigators of the cloth and its image have found no trace of paint on its surface or in its fibers. The source of the color of its faint markings has therefore been sought elsewhere. The 1937 *Scientific American* article, for instance, stated: “It is now established also that there

are particles of blood on the Shroud, so well preserved that they still show the composition of the blood. Beyond doubt, the two figures on the Shroud are the imprints of a human body . . . evidently that of a man who was crucified."

Yet here, too, modern examination tells a different story. A board of scientists appointed by the diocese of Turin reported in 1976 that the coloring agent used does not appear to be blood, for there is no penetration of the fibers, no surface encrustation and no reaction to benzidine tests.

According to Wilcox (*Shroud*, p. 45), twenty-one popes—from Sixtus V in the 1470s to Paul VI in the 1970s—have expressed confidence in the authenticity of the shroud. Pope Paul VI called it "the most important relic in the history of Christianity" (*U.S. Catholic*, May 1978, p. 48). Many individual church scholars have pronounced themselves convinced. Yet even today there is "a strong antishroud contingent in the church, and the church has withheld official judgment" (*ibid.*).

The Look of the Shroud

When actually seen today, the linen of the shroud is ivory-colored, almost yellow. On it is the faint life-sized double image of a human figure—as if the cloth had been draped over a man's head, allowed to contact both his front and back, and had somehow taken on the characteristics of a photographic negative. Darker-hued markings seem to be but wrinkles. The most prominent colorations are the burn and water marks suffered in 1532 when the shroud's silver reliquary partially melted in a building fire. One corner of a fold is entirely burned through.

But for all this, the cloth is very clean-looking; the outline of a man is rather obscure. It does not appear to the naked eye as the pictures show it, with their considerable contrast, a maze of light and dark reversed and strengthened by modern photography. Rather its markings are only shadows that shade imperceptibly into the background of the cloth.



Wide World Photo

BACK AND FRONT images stand head to head in the full-length Turin shroud.

"The closer one tries to examine it [the image itself] the more it melts away like mist. . . . Except when viewed from a distance, the image is extremely difficult to distinguish" (Wilson, p. 9).

The markings have been described as carmine, carmine-mauve, or carmine-rust. But pale brown or sepia is closer to the fact, though the alleged bloodstains are said to show a tinge of red. Some have claimed to detect faint blood marks even under the hairline—from the crown of thorns which was jammed down on Christ's head, they say—and 100 or so marks all over the body which they attribute to the flagellation He received from the Roman licitor.

In any case, what adds to the mystery of the shroud image is that its light and dark areas are actually reversed, like a photographic negative. How could any deliberate forger of the 14th century, having never seen a negative (since photographic negatives are an invention of the 19th century), have known to reverse the shades? Or how it should look when done?

This is but one of several pieces of evidence which have led many investigators to conclude the shroud image could only have been produced by some kind of close contact with a human body, probably of one who had been crucified. But

how? And whose body? And where and when? These questions all remain a mystery—and subjects of continuing controversy.

How Was the Image Produced?

Other cloths have been found from Egyptian tombs, and some shrouds "of known martyrs" (Wilson, p. 210), which have shown faint impressions of the high spots of the face or back of a corpse with which they had been buried. But not one has anything like a clear image. They also show decomposition stains from the decay of flesh rather than exhibiting "photography," according to Wilcox (pp. 54, 117). Were other "holy shrouds," such as were exhibited in the church of Cadouin in Perigord and in Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, exceptionally good examples of this kind, with the shroud of Turin eclipsing them all?

Attempts to duplicate the postulated imprinting from the face of a corpse by the use of powdered red chalk and a cloth resulted in failure. A "negative" was produced, but "the eyes, cheeks and mouth were too low; the nose was flattened. It was at best a caricature, and nothing at all like the precise, well-proportioned face on the linen surface of the shroud" (Wilcox, p. 64).

Perhaps a chemical reaction involving burial spices and ammonia from the body (especially if the body was buried unwashed) could have produced such an image?

Paul Vignon, in the *Scientific American* article of 1937 (translated from the French by Edward Wuenschel), wrote: "I was able to determine what kind of vapors had acted on the cloth—humid ammoniac vapors, resulting from the fermentation of urea, which is exceptionally abundant in the sweat produced by physical torture and by fever. We also determined that the vapors had reacted with aloes, which were spread on the cloth and sensitized it to the action of the vapors. The detail photographs show that the aloes were in powder form." But other scientists failed to verify such dogmatically reported results.

A more recent experiment, in which a hand was placed in a glove

The Early Church and Images

The early Christians had no pictures of Christ. They were Jews, and Jews allowed themselves no images, particularly if they were in any way involved in religion. Use of an image of any kind in worship was forbidden by the second commandment: "You shall not make a carved image for yourself nor the likeness of anything in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous god" (Ex. 20:4-5, *The New English Bible*).

Just before Israel entered the promised land, God instructed: "You will soon be crossing the Jordan to enter Canaan. You must . . . destroy all their carved figures and their images of cast metal, and lay their hill-shrines in ruins" (Num. 33:51-52). And that is what, in the main, the Israelites did.

They needed no pictures, no paintings, to remind them of the true, invisible God. But most Jews by the first century A.D. went even beyond that and allowed no images for any purposes.

The milieu in which they lived strengthened first-century Jews as well as Christians in their abhorrence of images. Says the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,

11th ed., "Iconoclast": "There can be no doubt that the early Christians were unanimous in condemning heathen image-worship and the various customs, some immoral, with which it was associated. A form of iconolatri especially deprecated in the New Testament was the then prevalent adoration of the images of the reigning emperors (see Rev. xv.2). It is also tolerably certain that, if for no other reason besides the Judaism, obscurity, and poverty of the early converts to Christianity, the works of art seen in their meeting-houses cannot at first have been numerous."

Such, basically, was the Christian view for 300 years. And any art containing images that crept in must be attributed solely to the conversion of Gentiles to the Christian ranks.

"It was a common accusation brought against Jews and Christians that they had 'no altars, no temples, no known images' . . . that 'they set up no image or form of any god' . . . and this charge was never denied; on the contrary Origen gloried in it . . ." (*ibid.*).

Eusebius, even in the fourth century, "in reply to a request of Constantia, sister of Constantine, for a picture of Christ, wrote that it was unlawful to

possess images pretending to represent the Saviour either in his divine or in his human nature, and added that to avoid the reproach of idolatry he had actually taken away from a lady friend the pictures of Paul and of Christ which she had" (*ibid.*).

Wrote Eusebius to Constantia: "And since you have written about some supposed likeness or other of Christ, what and what kind of likeness of Christ is there? . . . Such images are forbidden by the second commandment. They are not to be found in churches, and are forbidden among Christians alone."

This was the original teaching of the Catholic Church. But Christianity was soon well on the way toward corruption of its original doctrines.

Continuing in the *Britannica*: "Similarly Epiphanius [fifth century] in a letter to John, bishop of Jerusalem, tells how in a church at Anablatha near Bethel he had found a curtain painted with the image 'of Christ or of some other saint,' which he had torn down and ordered to be used for the burial of a pauper."

By the end of the sixth century the early Christian battle against images and icons was lost.

with aloe and oil and ammonia, did indeed induce shadings on the inside of the glove (Wilcox, pp. 16, 66, 95). But all this could prove is that brown stains could be produced on cloth by this method, though not a perfect image, even in such a closely fitting covering as a glove.

Only one other theory remained: the idea of "a sudden radiance of our Lord's body at the moment of the resurrection" (*ibid.*, p. 119). This is the "scorch theory" which invites comparison to the images left in Hiroshima, Japan, by the first atomic bomb which, even while it was vaporizing the bodies of its victims, simultaneously cast their shadows and permanently etched them into concrete pavements. But of course this theory is the very essence of circular reasoning; it assumes the conclusion yet to be proven true and then uses the theory as part of the proof. Moreover, there exists no

proof a radiation burst could any better produce detailed images of wounds, blood flows, hair and beard, or a *precise* image of a three-dimensional body on a flat cloth than any other suggested methods.

In Search of a Past

"I am convinced that this is the shroud that covered Jesus Christ after His crucifixion." So declared Dr. Max Frei of the University of Zurich after painstakingly testing for pollen grains in the linen of the shroud and analyzing them.

"My analysis of pollen grains has been confirmed under the electron microscope beyond any reasonable doubt. . . I isolated from the shroud more than a dozen pollen grains from plants growing in Jerusalem and surrounding deserts. They grow only in the Near East," he said.

"The pollen most found on the shroud is identical to the most com-

mon pollen in the sediment of Lake Tiberias, in Israel" (*National Enquirer*, Nov. 29, 1977).

But even if we accept that the pollen proves the shroud once resided in Palestine, it would not necessarily connect it with Christ, for Dr. Frei also found in its fibers pollen from the area of southeastern Turkey! This finding would, perhaps, support Ian Wilson's theory that the shroud itself is none other than the famous *Mandyllion* (meaning "napkin" or "handkerchief" in Arabic) which had been brought to Constantinople from Edessa in eastern Turkey. From there he postulates the Knights Templars took the shroud to the Holy Land before bringing it to France.

The Byzantine Connection

Fifty years before the shroud enters history in the possession of Geoffrey deCharnay and the Lirey church,

there was another Geoffrey de Charny. This other Geoffrey is not provably related, but shroudists suspect that he was. This man was a famous knight of the Templar organization, which King Philip the Fair of France charged with secret "idol" worship of a disembodied head—the image on the shroud, says Wilson—and Geoffrey was martyred, all the while denying there was any idol.

The Templars had sacked Constantinople (Byzantium) in 1204, which, as capital of the Byzantine Empire and center of its religion, had become glutted with relics and icons innumerable. Among the relics, according to extant records, was something called a burial cloth of Christ, which apparently bore a full-length image, and also the famous Edessa image, the *Mandylion*, which had been taken by force from the Moslem rulers of its city in A.D. 944. These both disappeared in the looting—possibly taken to the Templars' Palestine headquarters.

Ian Wilson speculates that both cloths were one and the same. He explains the double listing as possibly referring to copies of the original. A flourishing industry existed in Byzantium of making cloth and other images of "Christ." Many of these were, like the *Mandylion* itself, regarded as miraculously produced.

The problem for Wilson's theory is that the Edessa image is specifically described as a *face only*, appearing on a towel, a veronica- napkin, while on the Turin shroud is undeniably a double full-length figure. Wilson suggests the reason was that the shroud had always been kept folded in such a way that only the face was showing.

In any event, the image on the shroud has a long, sad face and long hair. A writer for the London *Tablet* was moved to observe: "The first thought likely to occur is: 'But how very strongly the figure resembles the Christ of any number of old masters [painters of the fifth century on]' " (quoted from Wilcox, p. 26).

What the Earlier Paintings Looked Like

There is more to that statement than meets the eye.

The oldest pictures of Christ are paintings on the walls of the catacombs of Rome. Most date from the second and third centuries. It was against the teachings of the church to have such pictures (see box: *The Early Church and Images*). Nevertheless, those who sketched them—only about 100 years after the apostles—were undoubtedly acquainted with individuals who were familiar with the general appearance of Christ that came by word of mouth from His own generation.

"... There is a painting of the Resurrection of Lazarus in which Christ is shown—youthful and beardless, with short hair and large eyes... Although it is now only barely recognizable, this picture is of great interest since it is the oldest representation of Jesus that is preserved anywhere" (Roderic Dunkerley, *Beyond the Gospels*, p. 57).

In all of these early portrayals, "He is almost invariably boyish... His hair is short" (Frederic William Farrar, *The Life of Christ as Represented in Art*, 1894, p. 43). Short hair was the predominant style among men in the Hellenized areas of the eastern Mediterranean (including Palestine) in Christ's time.

Edessa not Hellenized

The Hellenized areas around the eastern Mediterranean included Palestine. They were lands where men had short hair. The apostle Paul appealed to this fact when he wrote to the Greeks (Hellenes) of Corinth: "Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him"? (I Cor. 11:14.) But Edessa was beyond the Euphrates River—in the realm of the ancient Assyrians where long hair on men was considered noble. Long after the Persians had taken over the Assyrian kingdom, and into Christian times, it was still true that "the population of Edessa was predominantly Semitic and had closer affinities with its Iranian than with its more Hellenized western neighbours" (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed., "Edessa").

Other pictorial evidence found near Palestine corresponds to the evidence from Rome. "Reference

may be made to another portrayal of Christ, dating from early in the third century. It was found on the wall of a house-chapel at Dura-Europos in the Syrian Desert in 1931-2 during excavations of Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters... Here, too, He is young and without a beard and wearing the ordinary costume of the time... It is not until the fourth century that the familiar bearded face appears" (Dunkerley, p. 58).

"During the first four hundred years there is probably no representation of Christ as bearded, or as a worn and weary sufferer" (Farrar, p. 52).

It took almost 400 years to evolve the "Christ" we have been brought up to envision! It is a false Christ portrayed on the shroud, not the Christ of the Bible. (See the box: *Could Jesus Have Worn Long Hair?*)

Let's consider the Edessa image further.

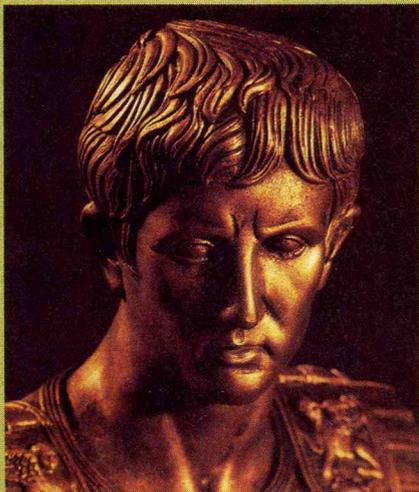
The Abgar Legends

The original Edessa image was a portrait on cloth, allegedly discovered at the city now called Urfa in or slightly before A.D. 544, and recognized to be the same as an earlier image of Christ of the Abgar legends.

The original Abgar legend centered around, not a shroud, but a totally different yet equally fantastic and unique artifact relating to Christ. It was a letter allegedly written by the Savior Himself. Eusebius, the fourth-century church historian, tells the story in his *Ecclesiastical History*, book I, chapter XIII: "Agbarus [a common alternate spelling of Abgar], therefore, who reigned over the nations beyond the Euphrates with great glory, and who had been wasted away with a disease, both dreadful and incurable by human means, when he heard the name of Jesus frequently mentioned, and his miracles unanimously attested by all, sent a suppliant message to him, by a letter-carrier, entreating a deliverance from his disease. But, though he [Jesus] did not yield to his call at that time, he nevertheless con-

Could Jesus Have Worn Long Hair?

The image on the shroud shows a figure with long flowing hair and a beard. While acknowledging that the Romans were clean-shaven—in the normal fashion of the first century—and that beard and long hair were not characteristically Jewish during New Testament times—some, such as Ian Wilson in *The Turin Shroud*, have attempted to make a point for authenticity of the relic by claiming that



Julius Caesar

“most Jews had worn beards and long hair since the time of Moses.” And further, referring to a feature of the shroud’s posterior image, “the victim’s most Jewish feature was a long streak of hair visible at the back of the head, falling almost to the shoulder blades. . . . the unmistakable impression of an unbound pigtail. One study has shown that this was one of the commonest fashions for the Jewish men in antiquity” (New York *Daily News*, March 24, 1978).

What are the facts about long hair and first-century Jews?

The facts are that no Jewish religious leader who honored the Word which had come from God would have worn long hair. This Word included “the law and

the prophets” which the Jew Jesus said He had “not come to abolish . . . but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17). Specifically, note Ezekiel 44:20: “They [priests] shall not shave their heads or let their locks grow long.” In Roman times the *Talmud* (*Ta’anith* 17a) specified a priest’s hair was to be cut every 30 days, and (*Sanh.* 22b) that its style was to be the “Julian,” that is, the short hairstyle worn by Julius Caesar (see photo).

Any Jew might have worn a beard. The Word nowhere condemns beards, and in certain eras, at least, a beard was considered an important sign of manhood (II Sam. 10:5).

The rebel, David’s son Absalom, is presented as an example of long-haired men (II Sam. 14:26; 18:9). Long hair was pagan; the pagan gods were so imagined. The ancient Assyrian kings were long-haired. Israel was to be separate from this way of the world.

But Nazarites—those who had a special vow of consecration to God—had long hair. Could Jesus, like Samson, have been a lifelong Nazarite? If Jesus had been a Nazarite, He would have appeared quite different from the average Jew. He would have stood out in a crowd (but see Luke 4:30; John 8:59; 10:39). There would have been no need for Him to have to be identified (Matt. 26:48; Mark 14:44).

Jesus characterized Himself as one who drank wine (in great moderation, of course). But in the chapter of Nazarite regulations, any use of wine or any other product of the grape is prohibited (Num. 6:3). So Jesus was not a Nazarite. (Do not be confused by His title of “Nazarene,” which designated a man who grew up in the city of Nazareth.)

“For a man to wear long hair,” wrote Paul, “is degrading to him” (I Cor. 11:14). And Paul had “seen Jesus” (I Cor. 9:1; 15:8). Can we imagine Paul regarded his Lord as shameful or degraded? Of course not!

descended to write him a private letter. . . .

“Of this, also, we have the evidence, in a written answer, taken from the public records of the city of Edessa, then under the government of the king. . . .”

Could such a story possibly be true? Eusebius apparently believed the alleged archival documents he copied were genuine. But few scholars believe it today. Nor does the New Testament give any such hint.

Furthermore, “F. C. Burkitt in his

Early Eastern Christianity (1904) showed an anachronism in *The Doctrine of Addai* which makes it likely that Christianity reached Edessa only after 150. . . .” (*The [BBC] Listener*, May 11, 1978, p. 617).

One must thus conclude that not only the story of a letter from Jesus, but also the story of the origin of an image of Christ, are mere manufactured tales coined long after the beginning of Christianity.

And whatever the date of Edessa’s first Christianity, the quality of its religion is dubious. At Abgar IX’s court in A.D. 180 was a teacher called Bardesanes, a convert later regarded as a heretic because he taught an astrological fatalism rather than the gospel.

And there were other heretics. Says Eusebius: “Under the same reign, Bardesanes lived, who dwelt in the land between the rivers, where heresies abounded. . . .” (book IV, chapter XXX).

How Was Christ’s Body Really Wrapped?

The shroud theory demands that Christ’s body was covered differently than was the custom in Jewish burial. The usual fashion was for the body to be wrapped cocoonwise in strips of linen cloth which were bound at hands and feet. All representations of Christ’s burial in the first four centuries assumed this Egyptian-like style. “The [Jewish] corpse was wrapped in a shroud, and bandages soaked with resin were wound around the hands and feet: a cloth, the sudarium, was placed over the face (John 11:44). Finally the tomb was shut” (Bo Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, p. 187).

The account of the raising of Lazarus illustrates the method. “The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth.” It would appear that he was so enclosed and tied as to be scarcely able to walk until “Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’” (John 11:44). Shroud of Turin theorists postulate that Joseph of Arimathea, not having time to bury Christ’s body properly, simply covered it, leaving the body lying amidst

(Continued on page 38)

A MAN AFTER
by Jon Hill
DAVID
PART
4
GOD'S OWN HEART

David, exiled from King Saul's court with a price on his head, flees for his life into the wilderness. Constantly on the move from cave to cave to avoid capture, David is sought out by others who are distraught with Saul's government. Even Jonathan, Saul's son, makes a personal and political covenant with David. David finds himself forced into a guerrilla movement far different from those we are familiar with today. Rather than fighting against the government of Saul, David seeks to protect himself from that government while fighting the enemies of Israel because Saul is too busy seeking David's death to fight them! David, in this strange political situation, even finds himself in league with the king of Gath, whose Philistine champion, Goliath, he had so recently and dramatically slain!

David and Jonathan, Saul's son, met in secret in Naioth where David had fled for his life. "What have I done? Why is your father so determined to kill me?" David

demanding of Jonathan.

"That's not true! It just isn't so! My father tells me everything, and surely he wouldn't hide this from me!" exploded Jonathan.

"Jonathan, you know better than that—your father hides his intent from you because he knows of our friendship. Believe me, I am just a step away from death!" David reasoned.

With no further argument, Jonathan then offered to do whatever he could to aid David.

In a complicated plan resembling a subplot of a modern spy thriller, David and Jonathan work out a scheme to determine once and for all Saul's true intent towards David.

Jonathan's aid to David was not an act of mere friendship, but one which carried political overtones affecting the entire nation of Israel. The plan was sealed with a powerful oath, a vow, a covenant. Jonathan was heir to the throne of his father. David was a popular figure in the eyes of the nation. Saul had been told by Samuel

that God had rejected him from being king of Israel. Saul sought to maintain and expand his power, and to ensure it for his son Jonathan. All this and much more was common knowledge. Many knew David had been chosen to replace Saul, and many were in favor of revolution, confrontation, and force to make the change.

Knowing all this, and being personally convinced of David's destiny, Jonathan told David: "I promise by the Lord God of Israel that about this time tomorrow, or the next day at the latest, I will talk to my father about you and let you know at once how he feels about you. If he is angry and wants you killed, then may the Lord kill me if I don't tell you, so you can escape and live. May the Lord be with you as he used to be with my father. [Jonathan recognized that Saul was no longer in God's favor.] And remember, you must demonstrate the love and kindness of the Lord not only to me during my own lifetime, but also to my children after the Lord has destroyed all of your enemies." (Jonathan wished to forge a treaty, as it were, to ensure that no political purge of the family of Saul would be part of David's policy once he was in power.)

"So Jonathan made a covenant with the family of David [binding on the family of David who would succeed him on the throne of Israel], and David swore to it

with a terrible curse against himself and his descendants, should he be unfaithful to his promise. But Jonathan made David swear to it *again*, this time by his love for him, for he loved him as much as he loved himself" (I Sam. 20:12-17, *The Living Bible*). Secure in the knowledge that his own life and the lives of his family were safe in the future, Jonathan left to perform his part of the contract.

The Terrible Truth

Back at the court of Saul, Jonathan joined his father in a new moon celebration with many other dignitaries. Jonathan sat opposite his father; Abner sat beside Saul;

David's seat was empty!

"Why isn't David here?" demanded Saul of Jonathan.

Obviously Saul knew that Jonathan knew where David was!

"He asked me if he could go to Bethlehem to take part in a family celebration . . . so I told him to go ahead," Jonathan lied.

"Saul boiled with rage. . . . 'Do you think I don't know that you want this son of a nobody to be king in your place, shaming yourself and your mother? As long as that fellow is alive, you'll never be king. Now go and get him so I can kill him!'"

"But *why?*" Jonathan simply countered his father.

At this response, Saul picked up his spear, hurled it at his own son with intent to kill him—and the terrible truth was realized by Jonathan: Saul did want David dead! In a fierce anger of his own, Jonathan immediately left the table, and next morning, as they had agreed, Jonathan sought out David to tell him the painful truth David already knew.

They both sadly shook hands, weeping openly at the circumstances both realized would follow. "At last Jonathan said to David, 'Cheer up, for we have entrusted each other and each other's children into God's hands forever.' So they parted, David going away and Jonathan returning to the city" (I Sam. 20:18-42).

A political enemy of the king, with a death sentence from him even the king's own son now believed, David fled again.

He had no weapons with which to defend himself. His family would soon be in jeopardy of their lives, and he must make some arrangements for their safety. He had no political allies of any power except Jonathan.

David felt he had to get some kind of organization together to counter threats of the enemies of Israel on all sides. Saul was unable to protect Israel because he was too busy, and tied up too much of his army, in attempts to kill David. David had no plan to seize the throne. He was trusting God to lead him, but he had to be ready when God opened the doors for him.

Ahimelech, who was residing in the city of Nob, was the priest in charge after Samuel. David went to Nob first, but kept his counsel to himself. By the time he reached the city, he was famished. Asked by the priest why he was there, David lied, telling Ahimelech that he was on a private mission for the king and could not reveal to anyone why he was there.

The priest replied to David's request for food by offering him the "bread of the presence" that was placed in the Tabernacle. Though this was not lawful for him to do, in David's extreme necessity he consumed it and gave it to his men; and Jesus exonerated him from guilt (see Matthew 12:3-4, Mark 2:25-26, Luke 6:3-4). The fact that no other food was available shows the extent to which the true worship of God had degenerated under Saul.

The problem of lack of weapons was solved when the priest offered David Goliath's own sword (which belonged to David anyway). It should have seemed strange that a seasoned warrior like David would be out on the king's business and have left his own sword behind! But then, what do priests know of these things?

Unfortunately, Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief herdsman, was there to observe all that happened. David left in a hurry, fearing Saul's men would not be far behind. Oddly, he went to Achish, king of Gath, the city of Goliath, to seek asylum, but the king's officers didn't much appreciate having the hero of Israel in their midst. They asked: "Isn't he the top leader of Israel? Isn't he the one people honor at their dances, singing, 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands?'" David was in trouble. To escape he feigned insanity: He scratched at doors like a dog; he let the spittle run down his beard; he mumbled incoherently. It worked. David escaped Gath and went to live in a cave in Adullam.

Atrocity

At the cave, his brothers and other relatives joined him. Then still others, disillusioned by Saul's actions, joined David. Eventually, he had a force of about 400 men.

They became a highly mobile, well-trained and equipped company of troops who could defend themselves and fend off the enemies of Israel.

David solved the problem of his family's safety (mainly just his father and mother, since his brothers were with him) by requesting and obtaining permission of the king of Moab for political asylum for them until the conflict between him and Saul was settled.

A prophet of God named Gad came to the cave of Adullam where David was encamped. His message from God to David was for him to leave the cave and return to the land of Judah.

David obeyed. But Saul soon learned of the move through his informers. As usual he was livid. He accused his own officers of laxity in their pursuit of David. He turned the tables and in a classic case of irony accused his son Jonathan of encouraging and abetting David to come and kill him! Everyone was hiding the truth from him, he raged!

Then Doeg the Edomite saw that this was the moment to tell Saul what he saw when David was at Nob. He accused the high priest of aiding and abetting fugitive David. In a superstate of agitation, Saul summoned Ahimelech, his family and all the other priests at Nob. In fear and trepidation they presented themselves before the king. "Why have you and David conspired against

me? You gave him food, a sword and advice from God! You encouraged him to revolt against me, to attack the king!"

Ahimelech attempted to defend himself against these crimes of high treason: "But, your majesty—David, the most faithful of your servants, captain of your own bodyguard, your own son-in-law, and a highly popular hero in all Israel, has come to me many times for advice, and as the king's advisor I have given him deference and hospitality, as I did this time. I know nothing of any plot and think it highly unfair to be accused in this matter."

Saul's Rage

The facts enraged the king further: "You will die for this, Ahimelech! You! Your entire family! And all these priests who are obviously in this conspiracy with you! Guards! Kill them all!"

But just as his men had before refused to slay Jonathan his son when Saul had foolishly condemned him to death for eating honey on a fast day he had decreed, the soldiers refused to slay harmless priests.

Infused with purple hate, Saul turned to Doeg, the accuser and informer: "Do it, Doeg!"

And Doeg did! Although the soldiers would not slay the priests themselves, they did not prevent Doeg from slaughtering 85 priests of God.

Then Doeg, in his zeal to please Saul, went to Nob and finished the job, killing the families of all these priests, men, women, children, babies, even oxen, donkeys and sheep. Only one son of Ahimelech escaped, Abiathar, who fled to David.

David, learning of the priest pogrom from Abiathar, the one survivor, wept bitterly, accused himself of being the cause of it, and offered the young priest his personal protection: "Any harm to you will come over my dead body!" Then David went off privately in sorrow and wrote what we read today in Psalm 52.

Physically, mentally, psychologically exhausted—but spiritually refreshed—David waited for unknown events yet to come. □

FEASTS

(Continued from page 30)

athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath ["crown," KJV], but we an imperishable [eternal life]. . . . but I pommel my body and *subdue it*, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (I Cor. 9:25-27).

This then is the message—symbolism—the meaning of the Days of Unleavened Bread. The Christian must *expel* sin—root, core and branch—out of his life. But he *cannot do it alone* without constant forgiveness for his slips and falls along the way—and without the active help of his Savior and High Priest who understands his every weakness.

By eating unleavened bread, a little at the Passover service itself, and an amount each day through the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, we symbolize our continuing dependence on and identification with the Person who said: "I am the bread of life. . . . This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread [what we are saying when we eat it is that our whole life of overcoming is centered around and dependent on Jesus Christ as our High Priest], he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6:48-51).

The children of Israel escaped from Egypt by night. So must we start out of sin as soon as we accept the blood of Jesus Christ. But Pharaoh pursued them before they could get very far. They were poised helplessly at the Red Sea awaiting recapture. Then Jesus Christ—the God of the Old Testament—opened up the Red Sea and the children of Israel marched through with a high hand. Soon the walls of water collapsed upon Pharaoh and his army and destroyed them to a man. This aptly pictures our victory over sin in Christ.

In future articles, we will examine the meaning of the remainder of God's annual holy days and discuss just how they are financed. □

(To Be Continued)

SHROUD

(Continued from page 35)

the rolls of cloth he had brought for the usual wrapping, perhaps intending to return and use them after the Sabbath. They suppose this may have been what Peter saw when he came into the tomb after the resurrection and saw "linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which *had been on his head* . . . rolled up in a place by itself" (John 20:6-7).

But Matthew tells us that "Joseph took the body, and *wrapped it* in a clean linen shroud" (Matt. 27:59). This shroud was obviously not merely a long flat cloth like the Turin shroud, laid out under the body, then folded over it from the head.

The Gospel of John plainly tells us that Joseph and his company actually "bound it [the body—not merely covered it] in linen cloths [plural] with the spices, *as is the burial custom of the Jews*" (John 19:40). This was done even before they carried the body to the tomb (verse 42).

Is It of God or of Men?

It is said that Luther's protector, Frederick the Wise, possessed 19,013 relics which earned the beholder 1,902,202 years' remission of purgatory! Physical man's desire for material objects for use in worship leads to such absurdity.

Can we believe that God Himself, knowing the inevitable misuse and the decline of true religion it would produce, would have given mankind for an icon, a relic, the very shroud in which Jesus was buried? The same God who hid the body of Moses and hid the exact location of his grave, lest the Israelites should worship the body of Moses, and lose sight of the worship of God?

U.S. Catholic thus concluded its discussion of the shroud: ". . . Forgers do forge, and people have a great ability to rationalize and theorize their way toward what they would like to believe.

"Ultimately, it's about as difficult to prove scientifically the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin as it is to document or explain the Resurrection itself. But the latter is an essential question, and the former is not." □

ASTRONOMERS

(Continued from page 6)

thus the escape velocity would need to be greater. For the expanding universe, a similar reasoning applies: There is the possibility that the expansion will stop and eventually reverse itself, or that it will continue indefinitely.

Obviously, the deciding factor is whether there is enough mass in the universe so that gravitational attraction will eventually overcome the expansion. The amount of mass in the universe is clearly related to the average density of the universe, and it turns out that the "critical density" needed to eventually stop the universe's expansion is only about four hydrogen atoms per cubic meter. This number may seem incredibly small, and, indeed, it represents a far better vacuum than the most sophisticated scientific instruments can produce. But the universe is inconceivably large, so the total amount of matter represented by such a density is very great. Now, if the actual density of the universe is smaller than the critical value, then the universe will expand forever; conversely, if the actual density is higher than the critical value, the universe will eventually contract, and everything will be squeezed in what some astronomers call the "big crunch."

Measuring the Mass of the Universe

But how do we find the mass of the universe? Probably the most obvious method is to simply count up all the galaxies we can see and estimate their mass. The astronomer J. H. Oort did just that about fifteen years ago, and he found that the mass of all the matter in galaxies was only about one percent of the amount needed to "close" the universe. Since that time, many researchers have attempted to find "the missing mass."

Astronomer J. R. Gott and others have made refined measurements of the mass of galaxies. Their "dynamical" method implies that galaxies may have a great deal of mass that telescopes cannot see. Yet, even

with this more exact method, the density of the universe is still nowhere near the critical value. In fact, the density they find is only about five percent of the critical value.

Other studies indicate that galaxies are associated with an amount of mass some ten times larger than the mass in the visible parts of the galaxies themselves. But this mass is still at least ten times too small to stop the expansion of the universe. Of course, there is always the possibility that additional mass exists between the clusters of galaxies, but so far no one has been able to detect an appreciable amount.

Another method for estimating the mass and density of the universe is based on the abundance of the element deuterium—a form of hydrogen with one proton and one neutron. Deuterium was presumably made in the early history of the universe, as were a number of other elements. But the abundance of deuterium today is thought to be directly related to the density of the early universe. In other words, if we knew the present abundance of deuterium, we could calculate the original density of the universe, which would in turn give us a good idea of what the present density is. Recently, astronomers have used satellites to measure the amount of deuterium in interstellar space, and they find that the density corresponding to the observed amount of deuterium is very low, indicating that the universe will expand forever.

Similar studies all seem to point to one conclusion. The expanding universe began at a definite moment in time about 18 billion years ago and will apparently never contract. The universe will thus end, not with a big crunch, but with a whimper.

Telescopic Time Machine

But if all these measurements indicate that the density of the universe is small, and that the universe will thus expand forever, then why is it that astronomers have often considered the universe to be oscillating and thus closed?

The answer is that for years Sandage and other astronomers used the

"classical" method of determining the deceleration of the universe. This method was simply a plot of dimness (distance) of galaxies against red shift (velocity). If the universe acts like an explosion, we would expect a straight line for such a plot, the objects farthest away having the greatest velocity (red shift).

However, when we view distant galaxies, we are actually looking back in time. Like a time machine, telescopes reveal the galaxies as they were billions of years ago, traveling at very high velocities because they haven't yet been slowed down by the gravitational attraction of the rest of the universe. Therefore, the distant galaxies should show a deviation from the expected red shift, i.e., their red shifts should be *too high* for their distance, when compared with nearby galaxies.

By measuring these deviations, Sandage was able to calculate the amount of deceleration the universe has experienced. The universe appeared to be slowing down rapidly, and ultimately it was expected to reverse its motion and collapse (and possibly begin another expansion).

Unfortunately, Sandage's method makes a very tenuous assumption: It assumes that the brightness of galaxies does not change over their lifetimes. But if galaxies evolve and get old, then they were probably brighter in the past, when their stars were still young and bright. Therefore, the distant galaxies we see may actually be farther away than we thought. This implies that their red shifts may not be disproportionately higher than nearby galaxies and that the universe has not been slowing down appreciably. When Sandage's calculations take this effect into account, he obtains a value for the deceleration near zero. So again, the universe will apparently never contract, but will continue to expand. According to the latest available evidence, the stars and galaxies of the universe will disperse forever until all is darkness and emptiness.

The Immortal Universe Dead?

This result—that the universe had only one (bright and awesome) beginning and that it

will have only one (dark and dismal) end—is profoundly disturbing to many scientists, astronomers, and laymen alike. For many, the latest conclusions of modern astronomical science simply cannot be—or should not be—true.

“This expansion is such a strange conclusion,” says Sandage. “One’s first assumption is that it cannot really be true, and yet it is the premier fact.” For modern nonreligious thinkers, there was great comfort in a secular immortality of the universe, a grand system without beginning or end, which could be achieved through the steady state or oscillating universe theories. But the triumph of the big bang cosmology has not only pointed to a definite beginning for the universe, but to an inevitable end as well. The universe not only is not immortal, its life span appears to be rather clearly defined.

The new cosmology is also very unsettling because it brings us face to face with the fundamental riddle of ultimate origins. As long as the universe could be plausibly said to be eternal, the question of origins could be pushed into the remote past, or perhaps dismissed, by simply saying the universe always existed. But the big bang cosmology has placed definite limits on the age of the universe, and the question of origins can no longer be easily avoided.

Perhaps this is what bothered Einstein, who, when he considered the implication of the expanding universe, wrote: “This circumstance of an expanding universe is irritating. . . . To admit such possibilities seems senseless to me.”

Stated the famed Harvard astronomer Harlow Shapely: “In the beginning was the word, it was piously recorded, and I might venture that modern astrophysics suggests that the word was hydrogen gas.” But in his book *View from a Distant Star*, Shapely was quick to note: “Whence came these atoms of hydrogen. . . what preceded their appearance, if anything? That is perhaps a question for metaphysics. The origin of origins is beyond astronomy. It is perhaps beyond phi-

losophy, in the realm of the to us Unknowable.”

A Limit to Cause and Effect

The big bang cosmology is also frustrating because it points to what may be a fundamental limit on the scientific concept of cause and effect. Questions concerning the prior history of the universe cannot be answered because in the first moments of its present existence the virtually infinite temperatures and pressures of the primeval cosmic egg would presumably have destroyed every particle of evidence that could have provided a clue to the cause of the great explosion. Such questions as “What was the universe like before the big bang?” may forever lie behind the insurmountable barrier of the moment of creation. “It is not a matter of another year, another decade of work, another measurement, or another theory,” contends Dr. Robert Jastrow, director of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies. “At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation.”

Still another reason for why astronomers are irritated over the evidence for an expanding universe is that it seems to violate the spirit of Copernicus. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) is usually credited with being the first to propose that the earth was not the center of the universe. At the time, his suggestion that the sun, not the earth, was actually the center of the universe sounded dangerously heretical. But in the ensuing centuries, the sun too was dethroned from its alleged special position, as was our Milky Way galaxy and even our local group of galaxies. As a result, by the mid-twentieth century the official dogma of astronomical science was that there is no place in the universe which is the center of the universe and that the universe will look basically the same no matter where an observer is located.

The concept that there is no unique place in the universe is often extended to include *time* as well (i.e., that the universe also looks the

same no matter *when* an observer looks). But this is incompatible with the big bang cosmology which specifically states that the universe did indeed look much different in the past and will look much different in the future.

“How can we believe,” asks Massachusetts Institute of Technology astrophysicist Phillip Morrison, “that just a few billion years ago the universe was totally different from what we see today? I find it hard to accept the big bang theory. I would like to reject it.” Yet the evidence is that we do indeed live at a unique moment in the life of the universe.

Finally, the new big bang cosmology has proved unnerving because in establishing that the universe had a definite moment of creation, astronomers have been brought—somewhat unexpectedly and a bit reluctantly—straight into the problem of the existence of a Creator God.

“Consider the enormity of the problem,” says Jastrow. “Science has proven that the universe exploded into being at a certain moment. It asks, ‘What cause produced this effect? Who or what put the matter and energy into the universe?’”

Observes Dr. Jesse L. Greenstein, astrophysicist at the California Institute of Technology: “It is a terrible mystery how matter comes out of nothing. Could it have been something outside science? We try to stay out of philosophy and theology, but sometimes we are forced to think in bigger terms, to go back to something outside science.”

Perhaps the supreme irony of modern cosmology is that the facts of science, so often considered a threat to belief in God and religion, are in fact providing a remarkable confirmation of the Genesis account: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” □

RECOMMENDED READING

Where did the universe come from? When did it begin? Who made it? For a panoramic discussion of the “what” and the “why” of the universe, write for the free full-color booklet *Our Awesome Universe*. (Addresses are on the inside front cover.)

Personal from...

(Continued from page 1)

and the need of God's Holy Spirit for salvation and eternal life!

But now the details had to be filled in.

I had *not yet* received God's Holy Spirit. I was still searching with a carnal mind—but, with this knowledge, I had SURRENDERED my will, my hostility against God, all rebellion against HIS law. I had REPENTED, and I had come to BELIEVE in Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

But I was still puzzled about water baptism. My parents, and ancestors for 200 years before them, had been Quakers. I had been brought up in that church, though I didn't know much about what they believed. I did know they did NOT believe in water baptism.

So I next studied that question diligently, in the Bible. I went to four preachers for help, but relied solely on the Bible for the final decision. A Seventh-Day Adventist preacher seemed coldly legalistic, lacking spiritual warmth. A Church of God (seventh-day, Stanberry, Missouri) preacher didn't want to be bothered and was insulting. A Quaker minister was friendly, but had to admit, finally, that he himself questioned his church's doctrine on this point and only went along with it because other "holy men of God" (as *he* called them) in his church did. A Baptist minister had the best and clearest explanation, was warm and friendly and, I felt, more spiritual in a sane and sensible way. So I asked him to baptize me, not into his church, but into Christ. For this I had to obtain permission from the rather august and dignified board of the church. On being baptized I *knew* God then and there gave me HIS HOLY SPIRIT!

Now I had added one technical doctrine to my spiritual knowledge.

Very soon after this my wife was taken ill with multiple acute conditions under which she could not have lived another 24 hours. She had blood poisoning (from a rose-bush thorn) moving toward her heart; an infection from a dog bite that was acute; quinsy with a big hard lump completely blocking her

throat so nothing could pass; and lockjaw. She had not had a bite of food, a drop of water, nor a wink of sleep in three days and three nights. The doctor could do nothing—said she could not live another 24 hours without sleep and with the blood poison moving rapidly toward her heart.

A neighbor lady asked if I would allow a man and his wife to come and pray for her. Reluctantly, and embarrassed, I consented. They came about seven in the evening. I questioned and cross-examined them. I didn't want any fanaticism. They answered all questions with the Bible. They read scriptures new to me. My wife and I both began to believe. They knelt by her bed, anointed her, and the man just talked earnestly to God, reminding God He had PROMISED to heal,

Little by little,
a doctrine at a time, a
question or subject
at a time, truth was
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like a jigsaw puzzle.

saying we EXPECTED Him to keep His promise, and then thanking Him for it. I had never heard a prayer like that.

The couple left quietly. My wife asked me to walk her out to the sidewalk in front of our house and back. The lump in her throat had disappeared—her jaw was unlocked. She lay down in bed again, went soundly to sleep, did not awaken until eleven next morning—completely healed of EVERYTHING!

After that I pursued an intensified study into all the Bible revealed about HEALING of sickness and disease.

Now came a study about heaven and hell. Then a more intensified study of the Kingdom of God and the coming millennial reign under Christ for a thousand years on this earth.

Meanwhile, I was pursuing an in-

tensified study of PROPHECY. The prophecies about a "beast" or the "four beasts" of Daniel 7 were a problem. I read many booklets and pamphlets on the subject—all clearly in error. Finally, I began putting down in chart form on paper all that the Bible reveals on it, and the meaning cleared up.

Also, even during the initial six-months' study before baptism, a minister in Florida I had contacted by mail wrote saying that unless I knew of the identity of the United States and the British as the birth-right people of Israel—heading the so-called "Lost Ten Tribes"—I was IGNORANT! So I obtained all the literature I could find on the subject, comparing every point with the Bible. I found many errors—errors in every book or pamphlet I could find on the subject. But what I did find in the Bible PROVED our identity. This was the needed KEY to unlock all the prophecies!

I studied seventh-day Church of God literature and Seventh-Day Adventist literature. I found the Adventist doctrine about going to heaven for a thousand years completely unscriptural. The Church of God taught correctly a millennium on earth, but didn't seem to know much about what will happen during that time. So I delved deeper into those details.

I studied the popular "rapture theory" about the second coming of Christ, found the Bible proved it false and dug out the TRUTH from the Bible. Then came such subjects and doctrines as "the mark of the beast," law and grace, and the Bible teaching about angels. Other subjects that had come up during the very first year of my study were the origin of Satan and the true meaning of Genesis 1. The true meaning of the Old Covenant, and of the New Covenant, and many similar doctrinal questions continued to clear up.

Little by little, a doctrine at a time, a question or subject at a time, TRUTH was emerging. But the Bible is like a jigsaw puzzle. One must get all the individual pieces put together in their right relation to other pieces before the WHOLE PICTURE comes clear.

You today get the TRUTH all put

together in ORDER. You get the WHOLE picture. I had to study, and grope, and search, and discard error, day by day, month by month, year after year. I had to REALLY WORK AT IT.

It was a continuous process. By the time Ambassador College was founded in 1947 (20 years after my conversion), I felt that we had the truth rather thoroughly. I did not then realize HOW MUCH MORE was still to come. What has come since—containing the MOST IMPORTANT knowledge—was like a BOMB suddenly exploding, opening up the BIG TRUTH!

I had tried to fellowship with the Church of God which, in my early days of conversion, was located at Stanberry, Missouri. But their ministers fought me, did all they could to discredit me, break up the broadcast, hinder and stop the very Work of God. Soon they became divided, with one group making headquarters at Salem, West Virginia.

Then they split and resplit until I lost all knowledge of HOW MANY groups there were. One established headquarters at Denver, Colorado, another in Los Angeles, another in a town near Jefferson, Oregon, another in Stockton, California, another in or near Nampa, Idaho. The man who headed it when I first came in contact with them went to Jerusalem, Israel, which he calls "world headquarters."

Even though they fought me, and very unfairly, I do not wish to impute motives or speak disrespectfully of them, because we find them described and identified in Jesus' own prophetic message in Revelation 3:1-6. Even though it describes them as spiritually dead, they are the remnant of what is, or HAS BEEN, one of the seven successive eras of God's TRUE CHURCH. As we are, and are doing the Work of, the Philadelphia era (Rev. 3:7-13), so they were the Sardis era.

I never became a member of that church, though I was ordained by a group who had been in it, locally organized and incorporated as the Oregon Conference. But when I had contact with them they refused to correct error or to accept any truth new to them. They ceased to GROW spiritually and IN KNOWLEDGE.

And, of course, what has THE NAME of the living Church, but ceases to GROW, soon DIES (Rev. 3:1). I do not rejoice in that, but say it in sorrow, because there were many in that church that I loved.

But in my days of trying to work with them, between 1927 and somewhere around 1941 to 1947, there was so much controversy over what constituted God's CHURCH GOVERNMENT that I, myself, became completely confused on that point. I could see that their systems were so wrong that I assumed that God's Church is a SPIRITUAL ORGANISM, and not a church ORGANIZATION. I did not want to assume any rule or authority that I ought not, and consequently when troublemakers and wrong attitudes came into our little church in Eugene, Oregon, I wielded no authority whatsoever, and the result was a church split in two.

Perhaps the *beginning* of the biblical KNOWLEDGE EXPLOSION we have enjoyed since the college was founded was the clearing up of the biblical teaching on CHURCH GOVERNMENT. Personally I had gotten so CLOSE to all the errors among the Sardis people—with a General Conference type government at Stanberry, and a "12 apostles, seven deacons, and 70 elders" type at Salem, West Virginia, that I was like the man so close to one tree he couldn't see the forest.

But once clearly seen, it was put in operation. I had to repent of neglecting to assume the responsibility God had charged me with in Oregon. God's government is always government from the TOP—GOD the Father—on down. Christ is the living HEAD of His Church. There is authority in the Church. Trouble-makers, bent on dividing and breaking up God's Church, are not tolerated. There is no division, but happy harmony and order, in LOVE!

Many NEW truths have come to light in the past thirty years. Some have been revealed through various of God's ministers. And also God has continued to reveal important and basic truths through me.

Among these have been the TRUTH about the PURPOSE of human life—the fact that God is not merely one person, or a "Trinity," but the divine FAMILY or KINGDOM; the

truth that we are now only BEGOTTEN, and that being BORN AGAIN is to be actually BORN into that very FAMILY, as sons of God, even as the living Jesus Christ is a divine Son of God. THAT truth is BASIC—and I did not understand it until after the college was founded. I could "see" it, even up in Oregon, but was AFRAID to accept it. It seemed like blasphemy to assume we humans could become members of the DIVINE FAMILY that is God! But finally I *had* to accept it, when faced with the fact that it is taught throughout the New Testament!

Another BIG truth is the final COMPLETE knowledge of what man IS! This came through my year-after-year perplexed search to learn the difference between the human MIND and animal brain. I discovered the fact that there is a human spirit *in* man—a spirit that imparts the power of intellect to the human brain—converting it from pure physical BRAIN to human MIND. This makes clearer than ever the need for God's HOLY SPIRIT, which bears witness *with our spirit* that we are indeed the CHILDREN OF GOD.

Another truth which has been uncovered is the origin of what the world regards as the Christian church, founded by the Simon referred to in the eighth chapter of Acts; the fact that the "Christian" churches of this world are not, and never were, the same Church Jesus Christ founded in A.D. 31; and the knowledge of the "lost century" of Church history—A.D. 69 to about A.D. 170.

Yes, the WORLD'S "knowledge explosion" may have resulted in DOUBLING the world's ills and troubles and problems. But our own knowledge explosion of God-revealed knowledge is opening before our eyes the whole future God has prepared for those who love and obey Him. □

RECOMMENDED READING

The Worldwide Church of God publishes attractively printed booklets on many of the doctrinal topics covered in this "Personal." Among them are: *All About Water Baptism*, *Does God Exist?*, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last!* Please request your free copies by return mail. (See inside front cover for addresses.)

CHURCH

(Continued from page 3)

cesspool. Evils of all kinds escalate. WHY?

If people threw away or ignored the instruction books for operating mechanical gadgets—or tried to operate them contrary to all the manufacturer's instructions—mechanical devices would not work, either!

It all started in the Garden of Eden when our first parents rejected their Maker's revealed knowledge and disobeyed His commands. And humanity as a whole has followed that course ever since—cut off from God!

Humanity has continued to reject revelation as the source of basic knowledge. Man has continued to reject the WAY of God—His spiritual law—as the way to all desired good, and to decide for himself what, in his eyes, is good and what is evil. He has continued to take to himself the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He has continued to do what is right in his own eyes. And in so doing, he has brought on himself every evil that has beset humankind.

See where it has now brought this world. Humanity continued along on even keel, in knowledge production, until about 170 years ago. As the prophet Daniel foretold, at "the time of the end . . . knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4).

Science, the False Messiah

So, about 170 years ago, scientists decided the human intellect had become so near perfect it could now safely cast off its swaddling clothes and throw away the crutch of religion and belief in God. Given sufficient knowledge, they reasoned, they could solve all of man's problems and cure all his ills. Modern science stepped forth as the new Messiah that would deliver humanity from all troubles and evils.

Morals began to relax. Spiritual values gradually were de-emphasized. Education threw the Bible out the window, and with it interest in teaching moral, spiritual and ethical values. Educational emphasis came

to be, after World War I, solely on intellect, unconcerned with development of righteous character. Knowledge production was increasing at an accelerating rate. Great PROGRESS was being made—in industry, in technology, in areas of materialistic, scientific and medical knowledge. But increasing knowledge DID NOT solve humanity's problems. It cured no ills.

On the contrary, man's problems, troubles and evils accelerated in al-

One is shocked and disillusioned in the discovery that virtually all religions, including traditional Christianity, have utterly ignored or rejected God's revealed way of life. This makes shockingly plain the reason why the world's religions and churches have not made this a better world.

most exact proportion to this increase in knowledge. Finally, in the one decade of the '60s, the world's fund of KNOWLEDGE DOUBLED! And in the same ten years the world's TROUBLES ALSO DOUBLED! And the trend has continued since.

The more man works at producing KNOWLEDGE, the more he brings EVILS upon himself. Now he has brought himself to the very brink of cosmocide. World leaders and scientists now know that humanity's number-one problem is that of SURVIVAL! Now they are beginning to speculate on whether the '70s or '80s may be MAN'S LAST DECADE. The engines of destruction have been

produced that could quickly erase all human life from the earth!

The Foundation of True Knowledge

But our Maker has sent along with the product He made—humanity—His Instruction Book. He has made the TRUE KNOWLEDGE accessible for those willing to seek and use it.

The VERY FOUNDATION of knowledge is this Instruction Book of man's Maker. The FOUNDATION of education to fit one for happy and successful living is being totally ignored in today's educational system.

One is shocked and disillusioned in the discovery that virtually all religions, including traditional Christianity, have utterly ignored or rejected God's revealed WAY OF LIFE. This makes shockingly plain the reason WHY the world's religions and churches have not made this a better world—WHY there is no peace, WHY so little happiness!

Ask the average church member how much biblical teaching has to do with his everyday life—his business, his social life, his home life, his politics, his entertainment and recreational life. He will probably reply, "Why, nothing, I suppose."

But the Church of God, from A.D. 31 to now, has *lived by* God's revealed WAY OF LIFE, as well as by the faith of Jesus Christ.

And in that it is indeed unique!

Importance of the Name

This Church has always recognized the importance of the NAME given the Church. And it has been always kept in that name. Twelve times in the New Testament the NAME of God's own Church is called just that: "the Church of God." Christ is revealed to be the living Head of that Church. And in this connection it is in one place only spoken of as the "Churches of Christ." But it is composed of the begotten children of God, who collectively as a Church are named after their Father. In some New Testament instances, a descriptive phrase is added to the name, such as the Church of God at Corinth, or the Churches of God in Judea. Today, it is the Worldwide Church of God. But Jesus prayed to God the Father

that the Church would be *kept* in the Father's name (John 17:11).

It has been.

A Worldwide Function

But when Jesus Christ said, "I will build my Church," it was for a PURPOSE that is more than merely preserving members in THE WAY that produces happiness and successful living for themselves.

The Church has a serious and worldwide function to perform. It is a mission of LOVE—of outgoing concern for humanity worldwide. Its commission is to proclaim to the world the good news of the Kingdom (government) of God—not to convert the world, but merely as "a witness." That government has been taken from the earth. It is to be restored (Acts 3:19-21). God governs—as do all governments (or kingdoms)—by LAWS. God's law is a spiritual law—the WAY OF LIFE that CAUSES—PRODUCES—every good result.

For carrying out that commission, the Church is called, in the New Testament, the "body of Christ." Few understand why. Jesus had come in human flesh, among other purposes, to start the Work of God. He said that *of Himself* He could do nothing. It was the power of the Holy Spirit of God *in Him* that empowered the Work.

He called and chose His disciples, who became the original apostles. He taught and trained them to become, with Him and the prophets, the foundation of the Church. He gave His life for the Church—to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world—for all who will repent and accept His shed blood which is full payment for their sins. God raised Him from the dead, that by *His* life we might receive eternal life as God's free gift by grace.

But, after His resurrection, and just before He was taken up to God's throne of the universe in heaven, Jesus "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4)—that is, wait to receive within them the same Holy Spirit that had empowered Him. "But ye shall receive

power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you," He said (verse 8).

The Spirit which had started God's Work in Jesus' single human body would now carry it on in the COLLECTIVE body of the Church.

That Work—that commission—was: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). And, for this present time in which we now live: "... this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached [and published—Mark 13:10] in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end [of this age] come" (Matt. 24:14).

The first great commission becomes a far more complex and sizable operation today than it was in the first century. The world's population has multiplied many times over. We live in a different, far more mechanical and complex world today.

Powerful Work Today

The Church of God was not, in the first century, a world power either religiously or politically. It is not today. At times it has undergone violent persecution. It is not, today, a multimillion-member Church.

Yet today it carries on a great worldwide Work. As a public service, it is reaching, by radio, television, and large-space advertising in many mass-circulation magazines and newspapers, 150,000,000 people with the inspired message of the WAY OF LIFE that is the CAUSE of all GOOD—of peace, happiness, prosperity, abundant well-being—the truly successful life.

Same Original Faith— Modern Procedures

The faith and way of life of the Church is precisely the same today as it was in the first century. It is the true faith "once delivered to the saints." That never changes. But today the Church lives and functions in a vastly different and highly complex and mechanized world. Accordingly, modern conditions necessitate different procedures, and modern methods of organization and operation. □

(To Be Continued)

PROSPERITY?

(Continued from page 27)

man's bloated welfare system costs today, because it will be primarily self-administered and will not require armies of bureaucrats.

In terms of direct redistribution of wealth to the poor, God's plan will take less than four percent of the national income, though this figure goes up some when we consider some of the indirect "welfare programs" of the Bible: the year of release from debts (Deut. 15:1-2); the land reverting back to the original owner every 50 years (Lev. 25:10); the no-interest consumer loans (Lev. 25:35-36); and the un gleaned fields left for the poor (Lev. 19:10). But even with all these measures, the percentage of "redistributed" wealth will be far less than it is in today's "capitalist" welfare state. More importantly, it will go to help those who are truly needy and not to pay hordes of middle-class "welfare bureaucrats."

In the world tomorrow, each family will own its own private property. But individuals who want to build, to construct, and to create will be allowed to do so. While it will be impossible to accumulate large tracts of land to the exclusion of the small farmers, it will still be possible to serve one's fellowman by industriously creating new goods and services.

As Herbert Armstrong has said, "In the world tomorrow employers will live God's way. They will be concerned for the welfare of their employees. And workers will put their hearts into their work. Production will mount, prosperity will increase for all, and the masses will have the money to supply a ready market for a greatly expanded mass production." □

RECOMMENDED READING

If you would like to read more about this soon-to-arrive era of peace and prosperity, ask for our free booklet *Coming—A New Age*. Send your request to our office nearest you—addresses are on the inside front cover.

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L E T T E R S

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Mr. Armstrong's "Personals"

Your "Personal" messages over the past year and a half in *The Plain Truth* have truly brought joy to my heart and a thrill and warmth that no other message by anyone else could possibly equal. Your warning messages of the truth are filled with hope of that great and glorious day of Christ's new Kingdom to be established here on earth. I look forward to meeting with you some day and sharing with you that glorious promise.

Mrs. A. R. Erst,
Algonquin, Illinois

Many thanks for an excellent editorial in the latest issue of *The Plain Truth* (July 1978). I always find your "Personal" comments interesting and thought-provoking; but I value this issue's remarks especially.

Terry Scott,
Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, England

Emotional Maturity

One article that made me take notice was "Emotional Maturity" in the August *Plain Truth*. I began to understand how far advanced you are of the other educators in the field of psychology. I knew what you wrote had to be dead center. It was like the dawning of a new day in my understanding. Now I need to keep this truth before me. I appreciate your leadership.

Esther Halvorson,
Bellingham, Washington

Your article on "Emotional Maturity" was truly an inspiration to me, as it brought out the truth on several issues regarding my personal emotions. I fall into your second group of extremists who control their emotions with their minds to the extent that all emotions are nonexistent. That entire paragraph let me look into a mirror that reflected my real emotional self for the first time.

I believe, however, that instead of dying in infancy, my emotions were put on hold. And it is your writings that

have enabled me to begin to reconnect the circuits. I truly enjoy your writings and look forward to future issues, as I can finally see some light shining on my doubts and frustrations.

Keith Rubinstein,
San Antonio, Texas

I would like to tell you how much I enjoyed Herbert W. Armstrong's "Emotional Maturity." I certainly learned a lot about my emotions from this article, and I know I will benefit from it. All your articles are enlightening, and I look forward to getting your magazine.

Adele Wolf,
Maspeth, New York

Painting Africa Red

An article in your July issue, "Painting Africa Red" by Mr. Gene H. Hogberg, is one of the most brilliant articles that it has been my good fortune to read. Not only does he tell the truth as it is, but makes no effort to hold back and issues a warning to the entire world as to what we have to look forward to. If it isn't already too late, I hope the rest of the world sees the picture Mr. Hogberg painted and will awake and do something. I want to compliment you on allowing such articles, and I hope there will be some way of putting this information in a pamphlet and sending copies to the President and every member of Congress.

Meyer Bloomfeld,
Chicago, Illinois

All your recent articles on Africa concentrate on the political and economic issues while conveniently ignoring the human tragedy behind them. In a tone of mindless rage you condemn the Russian imperialism in Africa, but at the same time you advocate measures that will change the African situation to suit the economic and political advantage of America. Black militancy in Africa seems odious to you, but you tend to view the institutionalized, centuries-old white racism in Africa as something that

is somehow less offensive and more tolerable. You cleverly point out the inhumanity of the black-controlled African governments, but you are shamelessly silent on the gross and vulgar repudiation of all traces of human dignity in Rhodesia and South Africa.

True, the black-controlled African governments are far from being perfect, but so are the white-controlled governments in Africa. Instead of taking positions on political issues, why don't you try to be a little more objective? After all, not all of your readers are middle-class, conservative white Americans. I don't understand why you serve as a mouthpiece for provincial, conservative and nationalistic political views. I would like to see *The Plain Truth* become truly humanitarian and international in its outlook.

Emmanuel S. Nelson,
Knoxville, Tennessee

The author replies: Recent articles on events in Africa have been intended solely to keep readers informed of prophetically important trends such as the decline of American power and will and the growing challenge of Soviet Russia. The articles of necessity stress the political and economic issues at stake on the troubled African continent. The Plain Truth does not "advocate" (even though it might explain) any particular course of action taken by any government in Africa or anywhere else in this world.

Salvation

Thank you for sending the June/July issue of *The Plain Truth* magazine. Your article "What Do You Mean . . . Salvation?" has been the only thing to change my life since my divorce and remarriage of fourteen years ago. I did not realize a man of 57 years could be forgiven his sins. After realizing this, I know I can live up to what is expected of me for a better life for all of us in my family. The enclosed check should help someone receive this fine word.

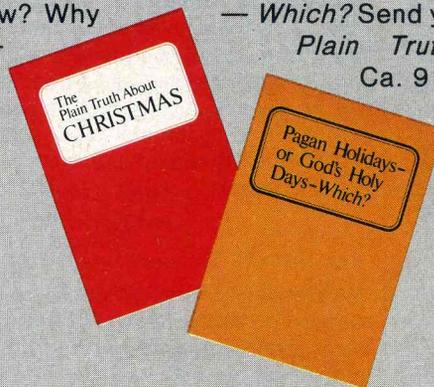
Roy M. Barnett,
Dallas, Texas



IS IT REALLY WORTH IT?

Tis the season to be jolly, right? Yes, but sometimes the holiday hassle makes it a little hard to be so jolly. Bills and traffic and maddening crowds are enough to make you wonder if it is all worth it. What are the facts about Christmas, anyhow? Why do you have to haul an ever-green tree into your house

every year? What makes mistletoe good for kissing? If you've ever wondered about these things, you'll be interested in these two free booklets: *The Plain Truth About Christmas* and *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?* Send your request to: Plain Truth, Pasadena, Ca. 91123.



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