

Wake-up World: You are already with one foot in the grave

On July 21, New York Times presented a good size article about “Russia’s Anti-Gay Crackdown”.

I read it with interest, as this is right up on our alley, and found nothing that I did not know before except the comments that followed.

I read a few of them and was struck by the fact that they all came from gay people, who with one voice called on America and the world to protest against Vladimir Putin’s curtailment of the homosexual’s “human rights”.

Many of them called on Barak Obama to pick up the phone and complain to Putin about his anti-gay legislation, and make sure that he discusses this point with him in the strongest terms when he visits Russia shortly. I did not know that Obama is scheduled to visit Russia shortly, but the gay people know every move of their ‘brother’ in the White House.

I kept reading those comments to see what the ‘straight’ people had to say, but there was none. I passed one hundred and still no comment from ‘straight’ people.

Then I thought I’d break the ice and offer them my own comment. I began by pointing out that the homosexual life style is not a private matter but one of concern for the whole society, and that in the past every city and people that gave themselves over to this kind of ‘pleasure’ has brought on God’s wrath and wiped them all off the face of the earth, homosexual and heterosexual alike.

I also told them that if Putin did not have an agenda against his political opponents, destroying many of them, I would be an enthusiastic supporter of him and his policies.

Then I quoted for them the following passage from the Bible.

Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Rom 1:19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them.

Rom 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because,

Rom 1:21 although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Rom 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

Rom 1:23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Rom 1:24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

Rom 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Rom 1:26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

Rom 1:27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

Rom 1:29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness;

Rom 1:30 *they are* whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things,

Rom 1:31 disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who,

Rom 1:32 knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

I expected a barrage of protests from them, but none came. I did something else in the meantime and checked out that web site again later on, but still no comment. Then I realized that the reason none came was because my comment was not published even though I was led to believe that it would be. I thought

that it may have gotten lost in the process, so I submitted a new comment, a shorter one because they let me believe that the first was too long, but still they did not publish it.

Then I realized that I was dealing with homosexual mafia that was censoring out all comments from straight people, leaving the impression that New York Times was now their fiefdom and straight people had no business there anymore.

Now if a publication like New York Times is under the sway of the homosexual juggernaut, what chance is there for smaller publications?

I am giving you now the whole article, after which we will make some new comments of particular interest to Christians.

Russia's Anti-Gay Crackdown

RUSSIA'S president, Vladimir V. Putin, has declared war on homosexuals.

On July 3, Mr. Putin signed a law banning the adoption of Russian-born children not only to gay couples but also to any couple or single parent living in any country where marriage equality exists in any form.

A few days earlier, just six months before Russia hosts the 2014 Winter Games, Mr. [Putin signed a law](#) allowing police officers to arrest tourists and foreign nationals they suspect of being homosexual, lesbian or “pro-gay” and detain them for up to 14 days. Contrary to [what the International Olympic Committee says](#), the law could mean that any Olympic athlete, trainer, reporter, family member or fan who is gay — or suspected of being gay, or just accused of being gay — can go to jail. Earlier in June, Mr. Putin signed yet another antigay bill, classifying “homosexual propaganda” as pornography. The law is broad and vague, so that any teacher who tells students that homosexuality is not evil, any parents who tell their child that homosexuality is normal, or anyone who makes pro-gay statements deemed accessible to someone underage is now subject to arrest and fines. Even a judge, lawyer or lawmaker cannot publicly argue for tolerance without the threat of punishment.

Finally, it is rumored that Mr. Putin is about to sign an edict that would remove children from their own families if the parents are either gay or lesbian or suspected of being gay or lesbian. The police would have the authority to remove children from adoptive homes as well as from their own biological parents. Not surprisingly, some gay and lesbian families are already beginning to plan their escapes from Russia.

Why is Mr. Putin so determined to criminalize homosexuality? He has defended his actions by saying that the Russian birthrate is diminishing and that Russian families as a whole are in danger of decline. That may be. But if that is truly his concern, he should be embracing gay and lesbian couples who, in my world, are breeding like proverbial bunnies. These days I rarely meet a gay couple who aren't raising children.

And if Mr. Putin thinks he is protecting heterosexual marriage by denying us the same unions [*they can't see a difference between their 'union' and a heterosexual one*], he hasn't kept up with the research. Studies from San Diego State University compared homosexual civil unions and heterosexual marriages in Vermont and found that the same-sex relationships demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction, sexual fulfillment and happiness. (Vermont legalized [same-sex marriages](#) in 2009, after the study was completed.)

Mr. Putin also says that his adoption ban was enacted to protect children from pedophiles. Once again the research does not support the homophobic rhetoric. About [90 percent](#) of pedophiles are heterosexual men [*and about 90 percent of homosexuals are pedophiles*].

Mr. Putin's true motives lie elsewhere. Historically this kind of scapegoating is used by politicians to solidify their bases and draw attention away from their failing policies, and no doubt this is what's happening in Russia. Counting on the natural backlash against the success of marriage equality around the world and recruiting support from conservative religious organizations, Mr. Putin has sallied forth into this battle, figuring that the only opposition he will face will come from the left, his favorite boogeyman [*Wrong again, Mr Putin works hard to bring back the left in Russia*].

Mr. Putin's campaign against lesbian, gay and bisexual people is one of distraction, a strategy of demonizing a minority for political gain taken straight from the Nazi playbook. Can we allow this war

against human rights to go unanswered? Although Mr. Putin may think he can control his creation, history proves he cannot: his condemnations are permission to commit violence against gays and lesbians. Last week a young gay man was murdered in the city of Volgograd. He was beaten, his body violated with beer bottles, his clothing set on fire, his head crushed with a rock. This is most likely just the beginning. Nevertheless, the rest of the world remains almost completely ignorant of Mr. Putin's agenda. His adoption restrictions have received some attention, but it has been largely limited to people involved in international adoptions. This must change. With Russia about to hold the [Winter Games in Sochi](#), the country is open to pressure. American and world leaders must speak out against Mr. Putin's attacks and the violence they foster. The Olympic Committee must demand the retraction of these laws under threat of boycott. In 1936 the world attended the Olympics in Germany. Few participants said a word about Hitler's campaign against the Jews. Supporters of that decision point proudly to the triumph of Jesse Owens, while I point with dread to the Holocaust and world war. There is a price for tolerating intolerance [*No, there is a heavier price for tolerating homosexual filth – annihilation, not only of the perpetrators, but of the whole world*]. (Harvey Fierstein, *New York Times*, July 21, 2013).

I could not help but feel sorry for that gay man that was murdered in such a brutal manner in Volgograd. I hope that was not done by people who call themselves Christians.

Christians cannot involve themselves in the affairs of this world, because our Kingdom is not of this world any less than it was for Jesus Christ.

Joh 18:33 Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" Pilate answered,

Joh 18:35 "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?"

Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, "**My kingdom is not of this world.** If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

Joh 18:37 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "**You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.**"

Jesus Christ did not come into this world to fight and take other people's lives in order to become a king in this world. He gave His life in order to be 'perfected' for kingship into another world.

Luk 13:32 And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow,

Luk 13:33 and the *day* following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

Luk 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen *gathers* her brood under *her* wings, but you were

Luk 13:35 not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' "

If Jesus Christ chose to die in order to be 'perfected' for another world, rather than fight for some fleeting pleasures in this world, then so must we. Besides, this is what He told Peter when he took up the sword to defend Him.

Mat 26:50 But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?" Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and

Mat 26:51 took Him. And suddenly, one of those *who were* with Jesus stretched out *his* hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him,

Mat 26:52 "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

Mat 26:53 Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than

Mat 26:54 twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"

As the Scripture had to be fulfilled for Jesus Christ without the shedding of blood, except His own, so it must be for those who want to be in His Kingdom.

Rev 6:9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them;
Rev 6:11 and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed.

What then is the Christian's role in this world? One, to be an example to the world.

Mat 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp
Mat 5:15 and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house.
Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

And two, to cry out the sins of the world and warn humanity of the price of a sin and a depraved lifestyle, and vice versa, the blessings and benefits of a righteous lifestyle.

Isa 58:1 "Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily, And delight to know My ways,
Isa 58:2 As a nation that did righteousness, And did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God.
Isa 58:3 'Why have we fasted,' *they say*, 'and You have not seen? *Why* have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' "In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers.
Isa 58:4 Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as *you do* this day, To make your voice heard on high.
Isa 58:5 Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? *Is it* to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day
Isa 58:6 to the LORD? "*Is this* not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?
Isa 58:7 *Is it* not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?
Isa 58:8 Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Isa 58:9 Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I *am*.' "If you take away the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
Isa 58:10 *If* you extend your soul to the hungry And satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall *be* as the noonday.
Isa 58:11 The LORD will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.
Isa 58:12 Those from among you Shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.
Isa 58:13 "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *From* doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy *day* of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking *your own* words,
Isa 58:14 Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Now if a Christian's choice is obedience to God and sacrifice, what choice do homosexual people have? Three choices: repentance, celibacy, or heterosexuality. Beyond that, we do not get involved with them, and do not lay our hands on them, and have no input on their fate.

Let the people and the powers of this world deal with them as they see fit if they refuse sound knowledge, a decent life style, and obedience to their Creator.



“This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come.”

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Newsletter 26 (04/13)

Friends and Leaders Around the World, Greetings

If you had problems reaching us via email lately, it is because we encountered some teething problems with changing to a new ISP. In order to keep up with the times, we had to move to a new internet provider that gives us a wider wireless coverage. We are sorry for the inconvenience.

Regarding world developments and biblical prophecies, which we normally discuss in our writings, many people would be concerned about recent developments. The world is not moving in the direction wanted by our heavenly Father.

Britain, America and France, the pillars of western civilisation, have abandoned any pretence of obedience to God, and are unashamedly pushing for a homosexual world. The world is sinking ever deeper into a morass of immorality and violence that can have only one outcome. The current Korean crisis, in the midst of which we are sending out this *Newsletter*, is only the harbinger of what the world will shortly experience on a worldwide scale.

But does anyone watch and care? World commentators seem to think that not much will come of it because China and Russia will step in to bring this crisis to a satisfactory end. But North Korean leaders would not venture into such dangerous games if they did not have their Chinese and Russians masters behind them. These are merely testing times to see how they themselves are going to deal with America when the crunch comes to it. They know that the world cannot continue to stumble from crisis to crisis, and that the many problems it is facing require a resolution sooner rather than later. And what are the problems? Overpopulation, scarcity of resources, lack of food and fresh water, widespread famine and drought, global warming and climate change, terrorism and social unrest, to mention but the most obvious!

Now where would one go to keep informed on these matters? Obviously to the media! So we picked up *The Sunday Telegraph*, Australia's largest circulation newspaper, with arguably some of the most capable commentators. And what did we find on these crises, especially on the Korean one? Nothing except a short article from Washington, on page 27, “designed to make ‘clear to our allies that US extended deterrence continues to be credible, capable and enduring’”. Well, that deterrence is so clear, credible, capable and enduring that even a rogue minnow state like North Korea is challenging it.

On the cover page, *The Sunday Telegraph* had just one huge headline: “THE LADY is a CHAMP”.

One might have thought that it referred to Margaret Thatcher, who had just died, but no it referred to . . . a horse which had won I don't know how many races.

Like the Roman crowds during burning Rome under Nero: give us bread and circus and we will be happy! Throw in a few torching Christians and we will be even happier.

Well, they couldn't have that one these days because, believe it or not, according to the Bible, there are no genuine Christians left in the world at this particular time in world history. We will have more to say on this topic, plus some major revelations in our next few editions, God willing.

For now, America has turned its back on God and chosen the way of Satan. Consequently, God has turned His backs on it, and without God all their deterrence will come to nothing even without an external threat.

From God's point of view all the evils of communism, though very serious, are not as demeaning and damning as the evil of homosexuality that the Western world has embraced. Not only that, but its spiritual leaders have filled the world with anti Holy Spirit literature which nullifies any chance of salvation.

There is hardly a web site in which one cannot find advertised literature titled, "Is God a Trinity?", and other such titles, which deny the personality of the Holy Spirit and His role in the process of salvation. And why is Satan so angry with the Holy Spirit? Because He replaces Satan in the heavenly Trinity! So when Satan's servants offer you their "free" literature, just tell them about these Scriptures:

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them **in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age. Amen". (Mat 28: 18-20)

Other Scriptures that are being fulfilled before our very eyes are the following:

"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, **who deceives the whole world**; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them!

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." (Rev. 12:7-12)

The Devil has truly come down to us and is now loose in the world. This is why the world is going from bad to worse, and why a catastrophic end is inevitable. However God always leaves a window of opportunity for those who care about their salvation and listen to His call.

"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel [*and the world*], with the statutes and judgments.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, **Lest I come and strike the earth with utter destruction."** (Mal. 4:4-6)

The Law that God gave Moses, the Ten Commandments, has ensured family love and kept the world on a civilized course until now. However, whereas fundamentalist preachers have made the Holy Spirit their target, mainstream preachers have targeted the Ten Commandments, telling people that this Law has been nailed to the cross. The truth is that it is not the Ten Commandments that have been nailed to the cross, but the temporary law of sacrifices that came to an end with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We are witnessing a wholesale attack from all sides on the Christian truth, doctrines and values.

This is why the following words of Jesus Christ have never been truer than they are now.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. (Mat 5:13-17)

If the light of the world, the Christians, vanish from the world, this world is good for nothing but to be destroyed. If you have not made peace with God and Jesus Christ, you have no time to waste.

We are reaching out to all corners of the earth with the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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The Christian Herald No 27 is now on line at our usual web site: www.thechristianherald.info.

In the service of Jesus Christ

Grigore Sbarcea
Coordinator A.O.C.F.

The Trinity Under Renewed Attack

It seems that we cannot send out a *Newsletter* without adding something to it afterwards.

We had some quick replies to *Newsletter 26*. Here is a typical one, from “Restoration Fellowship”, the people who claim to have restored the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Anthony Buzzard, Restoration Fellowship, Thursday, April 18, 2013

Thanks. Could you direct me please to your explanation of the creed of Jesus in Mark 12:29 = John 17:3. It appears you hear this creed as confession of a Triune God? Have I understood you rightly on that point. Where have you written on Mark 12:29? Thanks, Anthony.

Reply: First, here are the Scriptures you are talking about. You should quote them in their entirety and not just reference them so that your interlocutors would not have to shuffle through the Bible for them. This is short quotation, not an academic treatise with countless references where the authors could not quote them verbatim.

Mar 12:29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, o Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Joh 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

God is One. This is confirmed by both the Old and the New Testaments.

Mark 12:29 is a direct quotation of Deu 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"

And in the NT we have Gal 3:20, "Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only*, but **God is one.**"

God, however, has a Son and a Daughter, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Both Mark 12:29 and John 17:3 were spoken before Mat. 28:19. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

In Mark 12:29 and John 17:3 Jesus Christ could not speak of the Holy Spirit as a separate entity. He could only do so after His death and resurrection when the Holy Spirit became available to human beings and the Church became His bride and thus the third member of the heavenly Trinity.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ changed the nature of God forever.

Previous to that, the Godhead was a Duality, being composed of two personalities.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth

Gen 1:27 and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

These Scriptures tell us that two persons were responsible for the act of creation. So whenever the word “God” is used in the Old Testament it could mean One or Two Persons.

It is clear that at an indeterminate time in the past, God undertook another process of creation and metamorphosed Himself into Two Persons. The New Testament, however, adds a Third Person to the Godhead family.

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven
Mat 28:19 and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the
name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I
have commanded you;
Mat 28:20 and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

The third member is none other than the Holy Spirit, the Church of God and bride of Christ.
Now, Satan, the god of this world, does not like Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit, because Jesus
Christ overcame him and gave his place in the heavenly Trinity to the Holy Spirit. Here again is
the Scripture we quoted in Newsletter 26, in a larger context this time.

Rev 12:7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon;
Rev 12:8 and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for
them in heaven any longer.
Rev 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who
deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
Rev 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom
of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused
them before our God day and night, has been cast down.
Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and
they did not love their lives to the death.
Rev 12:12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the
earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that
he has a short time."
Rev 12:13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman
who gave birth to the male *Child*. [*In other words, he persecuted the Church of God, who formed
the New Israel*].
Rev 12:14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness
to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the
serpent.
Rev 12:15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might
cause her to be carried away by the flood.
Rev 12:16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the
flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.
Rev 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her
offspring, **who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus
Christ.**

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a
Rev 20:2 great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and
Rev 20:3 Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and
shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand
years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.
Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw*
the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who
had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on
their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.
Rev 20:5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is

Rev 20:6 the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Rev 20:7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

Rev 20:8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

Rev 20:9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

Rev 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Rev 20:13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Rev 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Rev 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

In the next chapter, Satan does not appear anymore. His place is taken by the Holy Spirit – the bride of Christ.

Rev 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

Rev 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.

Rev 21:4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Rev 21:5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Rev 21:6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

Rev 21:7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Rev 21:8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Rev 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, **I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.**"

Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

Rev 21:11 Her light *was* like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Rev 21:22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city
Rev 21:23 had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

Rev 21:24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth

Rev 21:25 bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

Rev 21:26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

Rev 21:27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

In these Scriptures, God does not differentiate between Himself and Jesus Christ – “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple”. Everything that belongs to God the Father belongs to Jesus Christ also, just as He said when He was in the world.

Joh 16:12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now.

Joh 16:13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

Joh 16:14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. All things that Joh 16:15 the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

These Scriptures prove another important point about the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ spoke of Him as a person: “He will guide you into all truth”, “He will glorify Me”, “whatever he hears He will speak”, etc.

Now in order to deny the Trinity, those who deny the divinity of Christ must also deny the personality of the Holy Spirit. But as we saw in Rev 21:9, in the fullness of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit becomes the Church of God and bride of Christ. Here are more Scriptures which prove this point.

Rev 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

2Co 11:1 Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me.

2Co 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I **may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.**

2Co 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus

2Co 11:4 whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife,

Eph 5:23 as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore,

Eph 5:24 just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself**

Eph 5:26 **for her**, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

Eph 5:27 that **He might present her to Himself a glorious church**, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Eph 5:28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves

Eph 5:29 himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the

Eph 5:30 Lord *does* the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

Eph 5:31 "FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."

Eph 5:32 **This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**

Eph 5:33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects *her* husband.

Now in spite of these undeniable Scriptures, the divinity of Jesus Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit have come under renewed attack recently. Our preliminary research indicates that this began with false Jewish converts, who were determined to erase the stigma of deicide from their nation. But instead of doing this through repentance, they did it by turning a bad deed into a worse one.

The divinity of Christ could never be denied except by those who have eyes to see but won't see, and ears to hear but won't hear.

Jesus Christ was both the God of the Old Testament and of the New Testament.

Exo 20:2 "I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1Co 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,

1Co 10:2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,

1Co 10:3 all ate the same spiritual food,

1Co 10:4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, **and that Rock was Christ.** But with most of them

1Co 10:5 God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

1Co 10:6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things

1Co 10:7 as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY."

1Co 10:8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;

1Co 10:9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;

1Co 10:10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened to them **as examples, and they were written for our**

1Co 10:12 **admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.** Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Joh 20:26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

Joh 20:27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Joh 20:28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "**My Lord and my God!**"

Joh 20:29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed."

And what did Thomas believe, and Jesus Christ did not contradict? "My Lord and my God"! The Apostles had no doubt who their Lord and God was; only modern day apostles, such as H.W. Armstrong, have different ideas.

In the Old Testament, we find the following statements, which tell us why God had to die in order to create a New Covenant, or as we more commonly call it, a New Testament.

Jer 3:12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: 'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the LORD; 'I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I *am* merciful,' says the LORD; 'I will not remain angry forever.

Jer 3:13 Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against the LORD your God, And have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,' says the LORD.

Jer 3:14 "Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "**for I am married to you.** I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

Jer 3:15 And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and

Jer 3:16 understanding. "Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," says the LORD, "that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit *it*, nor shall it be made anymore.

Jer 3:17 "At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. **No more shall they follow the**

Jer 3:18 **dictates of their evil hearts.** "In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers.

Jer 3:19 "But I said: 'How can I put you among the children And give you a pleasant land, A beautiful heritage of the hosts of nations?' "And I said: 'You shall call Me, "My Father," And not turn away from Me.'
 Jer 3:20 **Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," says the LORD.**

Because backsliding Israel had transgressed against the LORD its God [*Jesus Christ was "the LORD its God"*], and committed idolatry with alien deities under every green tree [*like they do at Christmas these days*], God had no choice but to divorce them, dissolve the Old Covenant and create a New Covenant with a new, spiritual, and faithful Israel; one who became a spotless bride for Him, whom He would take to heaven in due time. Now here is how the epistle to the Hebrews explains this process.

Heb 9:6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing *the services*.
 Heb 9:7 But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance;
 Heb 9:8 the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.
 Heb 9:9 It *was* symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—
 Heb 9:10 **concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.** [*This shows that it was the law of sacrifices that was nailed to the cross, and not the Ten Commandments, as mainstream Christianity would have you believe*].
 Heb 9:11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.
 Heb 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats
 Heb 9:13 and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,
 Heb 9:14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
 Heb 9:15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.
 Heb 9:16 **For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.**
 Heb 9:17 For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while
 Heb 9:18 the testator lives. Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood.
 Heb 9:19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,
 Heb 9:20 saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD HAS COMMANDED YOU."
 Heb 9:21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.
 Heb 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding
 Heb 9:23 of blood there is no remission. Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.
 Heb 9:24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often,
 Heb 9:25 as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—
 Heb 9:26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.
 Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
 Heb 9:28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Yes, "where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator."

Jesus Christ died in order to annul the Old Testament and create a New Testament.

If He was not God, then we have no Savior and are still under the Old Testament.

But Jesus Christ was God, and "will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation", that is, salvation for those who honor Him, and the Father and the Holy Spirit as He did, not for those who deny His divinity and the personality of the Holy Spirit in order to deny the heavenly Trinity.

Now even after we offered a lengthy explanation on this topic, we received yet another email from our old acquaintance, Antony Buzzard, of 'Restoration Fellowship' (April 20, 2013) who seems to have become the spokesman of the anti-Trinitarians, who said:

Thanks for kindly dealing with my point. You are now on record as saying that God is two or three "personalities." Father is God, Son is God and HS is God. That makes three GODS!

Jesus believed otherwise in Jn 17:3 and Mark 12:29 agreeing with a non-Trinitarian Jew.

Reply: I am not on record as saying any such thing. You may twist my words as you wish, but God knows the truth. I thought I would do you a favour in engaging with you again by trying to convince you to change your salvation-destroying preaching, but you proved once again, if such proof was needed, that those who sink into the depths of Satan could never be restored to the truth of God again.

Heb 6:4 For *it* is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God

Heb 6:5 and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance,

Heb 6:6 since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

The Scriptures explain the Trinity as **One God** composed of Three Members, Three Personalities, **of the same mind** – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – not as being three separate Gods.

Is that so difficult to understand? Or does this destroy your deception that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are not of divine nature, and not members of the Godhead family?

Php 2:5 Let **this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus**,

Php 2:6 who, **being in the form of God**, did not consider it robbery to be **equal with God**,

Php 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of

Php 2:8 men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him

Php 2:9 and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus

Php 2:10 every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

Php 2:11 and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now before you put me "on record" as saying something new about the Holy Spirit, this is what Jesus Christ said about Him. (Yes it is a "Him" not an "it" as you anti-Trinitarians make it).

Mat 12:31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

Mat 12:32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come.

Jesus Christ placed the Holy Spirit on a par with the Father, from whom He proceeds. One cannot blaspheme against an object, and only blasphemy against God is unforgivable, therefore the Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead family. It remains for me to quote to you just one more Scripture and bring this winded discussion to a deserved end.

Rev 22:18 For I [*Jesus*] testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

Rev 22:19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

Rev 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Rev 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

Amen indeed!

Exposing the nakedness of the anti-Trinitarians

Oh boy, it looks like we opened a hornets' nest with *Newsletter 26*. We've never had such angry replies in the history of this work. We do not understand why, for there is nothing unusual, nothing we could point out that would be all that different from other newsletters.

We send out our newsletters to thousands of people, of both secular and religious orientation.

Every so often, we'd get a word of gratitude from world leaders and other people, but it is seldom that we ever get a good word from religious people. It so happens that all the angry replies we received this time have two things in common: they all come from people who call themselves ministers of Christ but who preach what the Scriptures call 'doctrines of demons', and all deny the heavenly Trinity. Yet they tell us that it is we who must repent, not themselves. Well, they'd say that, wouldn't they? The problem is that they did not just say it but rose against us, reporting us to authorities for "spam". But people are not stupid; they know that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not spam and only Satanists would call it that way.

The end time battle with the forces of evil had begun.

What seems to have incensed our friendly Satanists the most are our articles on the Trinity.

We thought we had comprehensively answered their arguments, but we have not counted on the resourcefulness of Satan and his servants. We were preparing to move on and start writing articles for another edition of *The Christian Herald* when they stunned us with yet another extremely devious and dangerous anti-trinitarian argument. They said:

"God is eternal and could never die. But Jesus Christ died; therefore He could not be God."

It is not for nothing that the Scriptures tell us that we are dealing with a very wise a creature, but one who, from the very beginning, had used his wisdom not for good but for evil, not to build on God's creation, but to destroy it. The following Scriptures about the king of Tyre are in fact about the Devil.

Eze 28:12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "**You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.**

Eze 28:13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone *was* your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

Eze 28:14 "**You were the anointed cherub** who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. **You were perfect in your ways**

Eze 28:15 **from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you.**

Eze 28:16 "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones.

Eze 28:17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; **You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor**; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you.

Eze 28:18 "You defiled your sanctuaries By the multitude of your iniquities, By the iniquity of your trading; Therefore I brought fire from your midst; It devoured you, And I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you. All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you;

Eze 28:19 You have become a horror, And *shall be* no more forever." " "

Few things are more specifically designed to destroy people's salvation than the anti-Trinity doctrine. With this, Satan's servants are killing two birds with one stone. 1) They deny the divinity of Christ; and 2) They deny the place and personality of the Holy Spirit.

We thought they might settle down and accept their error, but clearly our answers were not comprehensive enough for them. The Scriptures tell us that those who have committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit could never be forgiven and never repent of their sins. So no matter what we say, they will never agree with us and never change their minds. Consequently, our answers are not for them anymore, but for those who might be tempted by their satanic, salvation-destroying preaching.

The New Testament makes two undeniable statements.

- 1) Jesus Christ was the "Rock", the God of the Old Testament.

1Co 10:1 And, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant that all our fathers were under the cloud,
1Co 10:2 and all passed through the sea. And all were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the
1Co 10:3 sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink;
1Co 10:4 for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them, **and that Rock was Christ.**
1Co 10:5 But with many of them **God was not well pleased**, for they were scattered in the wilderness.

Verse 4 makes Jesus Christ the Rock of old Israel, and verse 5 makes Him their God. There are other Scriptures which support these points, but for the sake of simplicity we will stop here.

- 2) The God of the Old Testament had to die in order to annul the Covenant made with unfaithful Israel, and be resurrected in order to create a New Covenant with a new Israel, which would become His spotless bride.

Heb 9:15 He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Heb 9:16 **For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.**

Heb 9:17 For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.

So, was Jesus Christ God? If He was God, as we know He was, how could He die if God is eternal? Complicated and difficult as this question may appear to be, it is in fact very easy to answer. But one needs to know the Scriptures, and Satan's ministers do not appear to be very good at it.

In the Bible, God speaks of two kinds of deaths: the first death which is temporary, and the second death which is permanent. We give you examples of both. We go to the Old Testament for the first one.

Dan 12:8 Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My lord, what *shall be* the end
Dan 12:9 of these *things?*" And he said, "Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

Dan 12:10 Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

Dan 12:11 "And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

Dan 12:12 Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five
Dan 12:13 days. "But you, go *your way* till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.

"You shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days" – a mighty long rest, of at least two thousand five hundred years, or even three thousand five hundred years, depending on which resurrection he will be brought back to life. It is obvious that these Scriptures speak of the first death.

Now for God, that is not a real death, it is a 'rest'. For human beings, however, it is a terrifying end of living. The New Testament makes a good case that humans should not be terrified of the first death.

Joh 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

Joh 10:12 But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.

Joh 10:13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

Joh 10:14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own.

Joh 10:15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the

Joh 10:16 sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

Joh 10:17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because **I lay down My life that I may take it again.**

Joh 10:18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

Jesus Christ believed His Father; He had no doubt that His death would be temporary. "I have power to lay down my life, and have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

This is what faith does to human beings. And how could they acquire this kind of faith?

Rom 10:17 So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Faith *comes* by hearing the word of God. The problem is that many people have an anti-Christian agenda, misinterpret the Scriptures and preach falsehood.

Jesus Christ gave us an example that we should follow. As Apostle Peter said:

1Pe 2:19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief,

1Pe 2:20 suffering wrongfully. For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

1Pe 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:**

1Pe 2:22 "Who Committed No Sin, Nor Was Deceit Found In His Mouth";

1Pe 2:23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

1Pe 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep

1Pe 2:25 going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

After giving us an example of how to live, Jesus Christ told His disciples not to fear death

Joh 12:20 Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast.

Joh 12:21 Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Joh 12:22 Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

Joh 12:23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

Jesus Christ knew that the Gentiles were not meant to come to Him until He came out of the grave and made the Holy Spirit available to the whole world through a New Testament.

The Old Testament was for Jews, and Jews only. Now back to John's Gospel.

Joh 12:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

Joh 12:25 **He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.**

Joh 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.
If anyone serves Me, him *My* Father will honor.

Joh 12:27 **"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.**

This is not a mealy mouth weakling who can barely say a word, as traditional churches falsely present a statue of one who barely resembles a human being, whom they claim to be Christ. This Man made a confident statement that no other human being could ever have made: "for this purpose I came to this hour". And what purpose was that? To die and rise again.

Joh 12:28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, "I have both
Joh 12:29 glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again." Therefore the people who stood by and heard *it*
said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

Joh 12:30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.

Joh 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

Joh 12:32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself."

Joh 12:33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

Joh 12:34 The people answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains
forever; and how *can* You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"

Joh 12:35 Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you
have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where

Joh 12:36 he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become **sons of
light.**" These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

Joh 12:37 But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him,

Joh 12:38 that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: "LORD, WHO
HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN

Joh 12:39 REVEALED?" Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

Joh 12:40 "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HARDENED THEIR HEARTS, LEST THEY
SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, LEST THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR
HEARTS AND TURN, SO THAT I SHOULD HEAL THEM."

Joh 12:41 These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

Joh 12:42 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the
Pharisees they did not confess *Him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;

Joh 12:43 for **they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.**

Joh 12:44 Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in

Joh 12:45 Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.

Joh 12:46 I have come *as* a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide

Joh 12:47 in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him;
for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

Joh 12:48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him— the
word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

Joh 12:49 For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a
command, what I should say and what I should speak.

Joh 12:50 **And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I
speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."**

This then is the meaning of the first death. Something that no one needs be terrified of, except those who have no time for God and Jesus Christ. Now here is the meaning of the second death. We give you all four passages in which this term is found. Read them carefully, and meditate on them, for each one touches upon the meaning of salvation.

Rev 2:8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last,
who was dead, and came to life:

Rev 2:9 "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan.

Rev 2:10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Rev 2:11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.**" '

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit

Rev 20:2 and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Rev 20:3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead

Rev 20:5 did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Rev 20:6 **Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Rev 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet [*were*]. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Rev 20:13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Rev 20:14 **Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second**

Rev 20:15 **death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.**

Rev 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

Rev 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [*This is the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity. Ed*]

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.

Rev 21:4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Rev 21:5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Rev 21:6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes

Rev 21:7 shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly,

Rev 21:8 unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, **which is the second death.**"

Every one of these examples is connected with defeating the Devil and overcoming this world. Now which death do you think Jesus Christ was subjected to, the first or the second? Did He overcome the Devil and the world? What do the Scriptures say?

Luk 4:1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by
Luk 4:2 the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said
Luk 4:3 to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."
Luk 4:4 But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD OF GOD.' "
Luk 4:5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the
Luk 4:6 world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.
Luk 4:7 Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."
Luk 4:8 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND HIM ONLY YOU SHALL SERVE.' "

Joh 16:1 "These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.
Joh 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.
Joh 16:3 And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.
Joh 16:4 But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. "And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was
Joh 16:5 with you. "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'
Joh 16:6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.
Joh 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.
Joh 16:8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness,
Joh 16:9 and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me;
Joh 16:10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;
Joh 16:11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.
Joh 16:12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now.
Joh 16:13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.
Joh 16:14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. All things that
Joh 16:15 the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

Remember how Jesus Christ spoke about the Holy Spirit, and that anti-Trinitarians deny not only the divinity of Christ, but the personality of the Holy Spirit, having turned Him into an unfathomable "it".

Joh 16:16 "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father."
Joh 16:17 Then *some* of His disciples said among themselves, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?"
Joh 16:18 They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what
Joh 16:19 He is saying." Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while,

Joh 16:20 and you will see Me'? Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

Joh 16:21 A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again

Joh 16:22 and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

Joh 16:23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name.

Joh 16:24 Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Joh 16:25 "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.

Joh 16:26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you;

Joh 16:27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I

Joh 16:28 came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father." His disciples said to Him,

Joh 16:29 "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!

Joh 16:30 Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God."

Joh 16:31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?

Joh 16:32 Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

Joh 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but **be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.**"

Through Jesus Christ, we too can overcome the world and the Devil. There is no other way by which one can come out of Satan's clutches, overcome the world, avoid the second death, and inherit eternal life. Follow the example of the Apostles, whose writings became the New Testament Scriptures.

Act 2:22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves

Act 2:23 also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up,

Act 2:24 having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

It was not possible that death should hold Him. And why not? Because this was not, and could not be, a permanent death! This was a 'rest', not of thousands of years as in the case of Daniel, but of just three days and three nights.

Did Jesus Christ know this? Of course He knew it! Much of the Old Testament is taken by His coming into this world, by His trials, tribulations, death and resurrection. This is why the Scriptures say that He was "delivered by the determined purpose and **foreknowledge** of God". What does the word "foreknowledge" tell you? That everything was well planned long in advance, a fact confirmed by the following statements too.

Joh 17:1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,

Joh 17:2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that **He should give eternal life** to

Joh 17:3 as many as You have given Him. And **this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

Joh 17:4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me

Joh 17:5 to do. And now, **O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.**

And these Scriptures:

1Pe 1:17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear;
 1Pe 1:18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers,
 1Pe 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.
 1Pe 1:20 **He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world**, but was
 1Pe 1:21 manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

“Glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was”, and, “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world.”

Foreordained for what? To die the first death, and be resurrected to eternal life! Millions of people, who believed in Him and in the Father, receive the Holy Spirit and become Sons of God no less than Jesus Christ Himself was.

Joh 20:11 But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and*
 Joh 20:12 *looked* into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.
 Joh 20:13 Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."
 Joh 20:14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"
 Joh 20:15 Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."
 Joh 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say,
 Joh 20:17 Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

Now undoubtedly, Satan's servants will say: 'Aha, you are now on record as saying: the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, and millions of other people are Gods; how many Gods are there?' Just One God! And remember this:

Joh 10:24 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."
 Joh 10:25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.
 Joh 10:26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.
 Joh 10:27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.
 Joh 10:28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch
 Joh 10:29 them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.
 Joh 10:30 I and *My* Father are one."
 Joh 10:31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.
 Joh 10:32 Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"
 Joh 10:33 The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."
 Joh 10:34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I SAID, "YOU ARE GODS" '?
 Joh 10:35 If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be
 Joh 10:36 broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

Jesus' secret, and the strength by which He overcame Satan and the world, was faith – faith in God the Father, and faith in His Word, the Bible, a fact attested by both the Old and the New Testaments.

Psa 119:160 The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.

Joh 17:16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Joh 17:17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Remember also the faith and belief of the Apostles.

2Ti 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

2Ti 3:17 that the **man of God** may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Faith, therefore, comes by acquainting oneself with the Word of God.

We have done our best to explain the Bible to the world, and have asked nothing in exchange.

Our nemeses, however, have not only twisted the Scriptures beyond recognition, but imposed heavy burdens of tithes and offerings on their followers. And for all that, they have millions (in fact billions) of followers; we have none. But then, this is exactly what the prophecies have foretold, and why the Apostles said that the time would come when people would not endure sound doctrine anymore.

2Ti 4:1 I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2Ti 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

2Ti 4:4 and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

2Ti 4:5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Paying tithes and offerings to such people will not save anyone in the Day of Judgment. In fact, it will work against them, for supporting an evil work.

2Co 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

2Co 11:4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

For decades it has been one man against the world, another sure sign that we are living in the end times. The troubles these people have caused us will come to light one day. There are signs that they are beginning to panic at the strength and evolution of this work. It says much about the nature of this world and the spirit that moves it. Fortunately, both ours and their work are fast approaching their conclusions.

Human beings were supposed to take note of the Scriptures and turn their hearts to God, so as to save humanity from utter destruction. Countless people read and download our publications, yet there are no signs that the Word of God has taken roots in any. Any wonder that the world keeps stumbling from bad to worse, to the point that, from God's point of view, it has sunk to the level of Sodom and Gomorrah.

When God made it clear to us that this would be a work of witnessing the Gospel to the world and not one of converting the world, we could not understand why not both. We know now the reason. The world has been deceived so badly that people can no longer make a distinction between right and wrong, true and false and holy and unholy.

The Catholic Church has both beheaded and truncated the Bible, telling people that Genesis and Revelation are not reliable. How convenient that these books establish faith in God and expose their Church as "Mother of Harlots".

Fundamentalist 'Christians' on the other hand, have infested the world with 'theistic evolution', telling people that God could not create the world in seven days, and needed evolution to do so over billions of years. Then we came along and stood up for the Word of God, telling people that the Bible is one hundred percent true, a fact witnessed among other things by extraordinary end-time prophetic revelations that are unraveling before our very eyes.

The master of this world is not interested in saving humanity, but in destroying it, and his servants are doing a mighty good job at it.

2Co 4:1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

2Co 4:2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2Co 4:3 But even **if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,**

2Co 4:4 **whose minds the god of this age has blinded,** who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

2Co 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

2Co 4:6 For **it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness,** who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2Co 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

2Co 4:8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair;

2Co 4:9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—

2Co 4:10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

2Co 4:11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also

2Co 4:12 may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.

2Co 4:13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED AND THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe and therefore speak,

2Co 4:14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will

2Co 4:15 present *us* with you. For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

2Co 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.

2Co 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,

2Co 4:18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

As you can see, true Christians have never had an easy life in this world. Theirs was a Gospel of trials, sufferings, patience, endurance and personal sacrifice, not one of prosperity like the one preached by the impostors of today.

Their denial of Jesus' divinity, of Holy Spirit's personality, of God's account of creation, and many other twisting of the Scriptures, are not incidental errors, but deliberate attempts to deny any chance of salvation to those who are unwary enough to fall victim to their web of deception. Unfortunately, the Scriptures are telling us that by the time of the end, the whole world will be blinded by Satan's veil of deception. We are living in those times, as we shall prove in future editions.

Out of the woods, the Satanists now want 'enlightenment and reconciliation'

No one can say that people are not watching the development of this work and not reading our materials. In the few months since we published *Newsletter 26*, we noticed changes in the doctrines of our nemeses. Gone are the advertisements for their blasphemous materials about the Trinity, and there has been a change in the demands for tithes and offerings among some of them.

These however, are a mere crack in the false edifice that runs through the fabric of today's Churches. What they've done so far is nothing short of plagiarism, having taken our teaching and presented them as their own insights; but then, what would one expect from Satanists who have preached doctrines of demons all their lives.

At first, they angrily reported us to authorities for spam. But people are not stupid. Even non-believers could see that the Gospel we preach is not spam, and that only Satanists would call the Gospel of Jesus Christ that way. Then they took issue with our teachings on the Trinity. Our replies seem to have had quite an effect on their followers, for we cannot imagine another reason why they would change their minds on a doctrine that lasted for centuries in their Churches. Now we notice another shift in their attitude towards us. They are asking for 'enlightenment' and 'reconciliation', but not the way God would want it, but on their terms.

"Hi. There was no newsletter attached, and I have no record of any prior contact from you. Who are you and what are your intentions?" B. H.

Sorry, we do not know how this could have happened. We hope this time our *Newsletter* will come through. If it does not, please come back and let us know. We will send you a printed copy. Just in case, you can find us at this web site: www.thechristianherald.info. It will explain everything about us. Here now is our newsletter. G.S.

"Your newsletter arrived intact, and I took the opportunity to give a thumbnail sketch of the points that you make, and it seems as if as the saying goes "like déjà vu all over again".

A number of the points that you raise were contentious to the early church as far back as 60 to 80 A.D. Your positions appear to be more in line with the "proto – orthodoxy", than with traditional Church of God understandings.

It seems that the major need of the Church of God in this era is for the Holy Spirit to enlighten and lead Christ's ministry to better understand and more effectively preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. This is not intended as a criticism of your work, but it does appear that many of the points you make, and many of the positions you take, are unprovable.

It would seem that the most positive position that the New Testament Church of God needs to take, is that we reflect in our daily lives the Christian love that Jesus Christ had for the church that we love one another as it so clearly and plainly says John 13:34, 15:12, Romans 13:8, and five times in first John

Please don't take this as a criticism, is more than enough of that going through the churches of God in him we need to experience. The church needs to be reconciled to Christ and the father, and with one another as Jesus, so clearly guides the church:

Matt 5:23-24 23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Matt 5:23-24, KJV

Your brother in Christ, B. H.

We retain his name and give only his initials. Many people consider it a badge of honor to be mentioned in a publication that is being read in more than 140 nations, even if in a negative sense.

We asked him to elaborate on his points, but he did not reply. However, it is not hard to see what he was getting at, and so we decided to answer him anyway.

He said that he has 'no record of any prior contact from' us, yet he used the term, 'déjà vu'.

There is a web site in the USA which lists all Churches that ensued from, or had any links with, the Worldwide Church of God. That list extends over several pages.

It so happens that both our Foundation and his Church are listed on the very first page. Has he never looked at that page, and never noticed our Foundation when its name stands out so differently?

From the beginning of this work, we made a priority to send copies of our magazines and newsletters to the Churches on that list. That is because primarily this work began as a revolt against the false teachings of the WCG and its affiliated Churches. Now even if we are conservative about it, he must have been contacted at least a dozen times from us. We'd like to know what happened to our correspondence that he says he has no record of any prior contact from us. Even if our air mails got lost during the first decade of this work, the emails we sent to all Churches on that list during the second decade did reach their destination. If he deliberately deleted them without reading them, he should know that willing ignorance will not save anyone in the Day of Judgment?

In his next claim he said, 'Your positions appear to be more in line with the 'proto-orthodoxy', than with traditional Church of God understandings'.

We would be most unhappy if someone said that our 'positions' are no different from the traditional "Churches of God". As for the line of 'proto-orthodoxy', we've never heard of it, so we looked it up in a number of dictionaries, but none had it. Then we looked up the term, 'orthodoxy', and this is what Merriam-Webster dictionary says about it.

"A member of an Eastern Orthodox Church. Conforming to established doctrine esp. in religion."

For years, the Worldwide Church of God preachers have accused me of preaching the Orthodox religion in which I was born. No one would have been more surprised to hear that than the Orthodox Church itself. They had to say something to justify themselves to their members, for they could never tell them the truth. It was convenient for them to label us with something that no one knew anything about, hoping that no one will ask any further questions, but that does not work anymore, for this work is now well known in every corner of the earth.

In another claim, B.H. said: "A number of the points that you raise were contentious to the early church as far back as 60 to 80 A.D." We would like to have known what he had in mind, because it so happens that the points of contention in the early Churches of God, which the Apostles condemned in the strongest terms, are the very ones that the WCG and its daughter Churches have been preaching. These include 'doctrine of demons', denial of the Holy Spirit in the heavenly Trinity, the need to be born again in order to be saved, tithing and mandatory offerings doctrine, dietary laws, interdiction of interracial marriage, and many more. As an example, this is what Apostle Paul wrote in his first epistle to Timothy (about 65 A.D.)

1Ti 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and **doctrines of demons**,

1Ti 4:2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

1Ti 4:3 forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

1Ti 4:4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received
1Ti 4:5 with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.
1Ti 4:6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

Now how do these people consider themselves 'good ministers of Jesus Christ' when they misquote the Scriptures and go against the teachings of Apostle Paul in every one of these points? Not only that, but when it came to crying aloud the sins of this world, as God says we must do in order to save it from utter destruction, not only did we stand alone, but they reported us for spam. And they did other things in order to derail us from our task, but we leave those things out for now.

Few people realise what a struggle for the life of this planet takes place in their midst. Now let us have a look at another 'point of contention' that Apostle Paul wrote about.

Act 20:27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.
Act 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
[Remember, these preachers say that the Holy Spirit is an 'it' not a personality, yet here He made the shepherds overseers over the Churches of God]
Act 20:29 For I know this, that after my departure **savage wolves** will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
Act 20:30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.
Act 20:31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.
Act 20:32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
Act 20:33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.
Act 20:34 Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. *[It is not for these preachers to work with their hands to provide for their necessities. They would rather impose phony tithing doctrines on those who are unfortunate enough to fall prey to their lures]*
Act 20:35 I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "
Act 20:36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.
Act 20:37 Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,
Act 20:38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Have 'savage wolves' taken over the Churches of God. The answer is far too obvious. There has been no more a 'savage wolf' in the history of Christianity than the one we identified as the "foolish shepherd" of the prophet Zechariah – none other than Herbert W. Armstrong, their master.

Zec 11:15 And the LORD said to me, "Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd.

Zec 11:16 For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land *who* will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces.

Zec 11:17 "Woe to the worthless shepherd, Who leaves the flock! A sword *shall be* against his arm And against his right eye; His arm shall completely wither, And his right eye shall be totally blinded."

In his last epistle to his disciple Timothy, Apostle Paul wrote.

2Ti 4:1 I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2Ti 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

2Ti 4:3 For **the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine**, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

2Ti 4:4 **and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth**, and be turned aside **to fables**.

2Ti 4:5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill

2Ti 4:6 your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

2Ti 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally,

2Ti 4:8 there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Apostle Paul wrote that epistle in 66 A.D., shortly before he was executed by the Romans. No other New Testament writings are dated after this year, except those of Apostle John which are placed between 90 and 95 A.D., so from 66 A.D. to 90 A.D. we have a blank about which little is known. The one major historical event that occurred in this period was the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. At that time, both the Jews and the Christians were spread among other nations, the Christians because they were considered just another Jewish sect.

What then are the contentions that this man thinks occurred in the Churches of God between the years 60 and 80 A.D. that concern my writings? He gave us no answer, but let's go on.

"It seems that the major need of the Church of God in this era is for the Holy Spirit to **enlighten** and lead Christ's ministry to better understand and more effectively preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. This is not intended as a criticism of your work, but it does appear that many of the points you make, and many of the positions you take, are un-provable."

Enlighten the ministers of Churches of God?

Forty years ago, I took a plane from Toronto, Canada, where I used to live in those days, to Pasadena, California, where the headquarters of the Worldwide Church of God were located, in order to '**enlighten**' the leaders of their biblical errors and the grievous burdens they were placing upon the members of the Church, but in true fundamentalist manner they rejected me and robbed me of my possessions. When I returned home I found myself locked out of my own flat with nothing but what I was wearing then. The ministers told the two 'brethren' with whom I was sharing the apartment that because I had 'abandoned' it they were entitled to help themselves to everything I had. And without questioning it they did just that.

That's the kind of brotherly love they preached and practiced in the "one and only true Church of God in the world". Now, forty years later, they tell me that they want to be enlightened so that they may 'more effectively preach the gospel of the kingdom of God'. It's all about them, and not a word of sorry, repentance, or desire to make up for their dastardly deed. Moreover, they went on to speak of reconciliation, but not on God's terms, but on their terms.

The church needs to be reconciled to Christ and the father, and with one another as Jesus, so clearly guides the church:

Matt 5:23-24 23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there **rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;**

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; **first be reconciled to thy brother,** and then come and offer thy gift. Matt 5:23-24, KJV

They have the nerve to quote to me Mathew 5:23, 24, implying that I had offended them and they have something against me, and therefore it is me, their victim, who must seek reconciliation with them, and not them with me. Well, I have some Scriptures for them too.

Num 5:5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel:

Num 5:6 'When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the LORD, and that person is guilty,

Num 5:7 then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. **He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give it to the one he has wronged.**

When people commit sin, regardless of its nature, they sin against the Lord. If they wrong other people, they must make restitution in full and add one-fifth to it. Failure to do so, separates them from God, causes them to lose their logic and reason, and makes them incapable of genuine repentance. Survival in this world and the pursuit of inordinate pleasures become their obsessive priorities.

This is what I am facing here: people incapable of repentance and of seeing their errors.

Having failed in their task of putting an end to this work, and seeing a nightmare coming true before their eyes – the stone which they rejected becoming another chief cornerstone – they now want reconciliation with **'their brother'**, but as I said, not on God's terms, but on their own terms.

The biblical principle of guilt by association makes all preachers that trace their Church's roots in the WCG guilty of the same sins. And if they did not know this fact before, they know it now.

My interlocutor went on to sign his email as, "Your brother in Christ".

No friend, we are not brothers in Christ. I do not preach 'doctrines of demons', do not commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, do not deny the Trinity, do not deny people's souls, do not believe in theistic evolution, have never robbed anyone, do not observe Holy Days other than the ones observed by Jesus Christ and His Apostles, and on dates proscribed by the Bible, do not forbid the Lord's Prayer in the Church, do not confuse born again with resurrection, do not preach another life for unreconstructed sinners, do not impose phony tithing doctrines on anyone, do not preach other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a Gospel of tribulations and trials, not one of prosperity and pleasure that Herbert W Armstrong, your master, took to the world and inculcated you all with.

As for your claim that we must "reflect in our daily lives the Christian love that Jesus Christ had for the church", all I can say is do what you preach, and don't try to teach me about it.

Eternal Life According To Modern Day Judaism

Eternal Life is to attend Temple service.

Torah from the Old City of Jerusalem: Eternal life cannot be found in an ointment or lotion, or salve, or cream, or pill, or capsule. It cannot be swallowed or applied. It cannot be purchased or consumed.

Eternal life awaits us all and can be experienced in this world via the Divine service of the Holy Temple. (Rabbi Chaim Richman, Director of the International Department of The Temple Institute in Jerusalem, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, April 25, 2013)

What of the Jews that do not have Holy Temples?

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Eternal Life According To The New Testament

Eternal life is to know and obey God.

Joh 17:3 And **this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

Joh 17:4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

Joh 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You

Joh 17:6 before the world was. "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

Joh 17:7 Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You.

Joh 17:8 For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

Joh 17:9 "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me,

Joh 17:10 for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.

Joh 17:11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as *We are*.

Joh 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be

Joh 17:13 fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have

Joh 17:14 My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Joh 17:15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them

Joh 17:16 from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Joh 17:17 Sanctify them by Your truth. **Your word is truth.**

1Jn 2:23 **Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.**

1Jn 2:24 Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

1Jn 2:25 **And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.**

Mar 10:17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Mar 10:18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, *that is*, God.

Mar 10:19 You know the commandments: 'Do Not Commit Adultery,' 'Do Not Murder,' 'Do Not Steal,' 'Do Not Bear False Witness,' 'Do Not Defraud,' 'Honor Your Father And Your Mother.'"

Mar 10:20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

Mar 10:21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

Mar 10:22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Mar 10:23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mar 10:24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!

Mar 10:25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Mar 10:26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?"

Mar 10:27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men *it is* impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

Mat 8:5 Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him,

Mat 8:6 saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."

Mat 8:7 And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

Mat 8:8 The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.

Mat 8:9 For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this *one*, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does *it*."

Mat 8:10 When Jesus heard *it*, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!

Mat 8:11 And I say to you **that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.**

Mat 8:12 **But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness.** There will be

Mat 8:13 weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.

Gal 3:15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though *it is* only a man's covenant, yet *if it is* confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "AND TO YOUR SEED," who is Christ.

Gal 3:17 And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

Gal 3:18 For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by

Gal 3:19 promise. What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a

Gal 3:20 mediator. Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only*, but God is one.

Gal 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For **if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.**

Gal 3:22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might

Gal 3:23 be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

Gal 3:24 Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Gal 3:25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Gal 3:26 For **you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.**

Gal 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor

Gal 3:29 female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And **if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**

Resist the ‘abomination of desolation’

Africa, Africa, don’t listen to the ‘abomination of desolation’ who is telling you to embrace homosexuality.

People of the Patriarchs embraced him, and he is now leading them and the world to a terminal catastrophe. The road to annihilation is unexpectedly gathering speed. This is why.

Rom 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they
Rom 1:21 are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.
Rom 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,
Rom 1:23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.
Rom 1:24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,
Rom 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.
Rom 1:26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.
Rom 1:27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.
Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;
Rom 1:29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers,
Rom 1:30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to
Rom 1:31 parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;
Rom 1:32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

They know that God wiped out of the face of the earth every city and people that gave themselves over to this unspeakable sin, yet now the “abomination of desolation” wants the entire world to embrace it.

Can you see why Jesus Christ said that the very life of this planet is at stake at his time?

Mat 24:12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.
Mat 24:13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved.
Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.
Mat 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),
Mat 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.
Mat 24:22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

You are living in those days.

Through many tribulations, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God has been “preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations”, and now you know what follows.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Law of God will survive and prosper into the new world that will arise from the ashes of the "Great Tribulation", even though much of the world will not. Don't let anyone tell you that the righteous and the abominable are equal before God.

The "abomination of desolation" says that everyone is equal before the Constitution. It is not the Constitution that has created this world and keeps it alive, but God, who says that no man will make it into His eternal Kingdom that behaves like an animal.

Your Savior said that some people look like humans, but at heart they are something else.

Mat 7:6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

Other people appear to be alive, but in fact are little more than walking corpses.

Mat 8:21 Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

Mat 8:22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

You know now why sound reason and righteousness are not to the liking of these 'humans'.

You also know why every corner of the world is groaning under social unrest and "natural" disasters such as the world has never seen. And these are only the beginning.

Wait for your Savior, Africa, for HE IS COMING! You could become the salvation of this exceedingly immoral world, for no other people, nation, or continent has turned to God. They have all departed from 'sound doctrine' and given themselves teachers who have "turned *their* ears away from the truth" on to filth and fables.

The world is truly gripped by an unstoppable death wish.

2Ti 4:1 I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2Ti 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will **not endure sound doctrine**, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

2Ti 4:4 and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

2Ti 4:5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your

2Ti 4:6 ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

2Ti 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2Ti 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

A crown of righteousness is laid up for everyone who does not succumb to the false values of this world, and waits patiently for the arrival of his Savior. This is what awaits the rest.

Luk 19:26 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

Luk 19:27 But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay *them* before me.' "

THE CHRISTIAN HOLY DAYS FOR THE YEARS 2013 - 2015

		2013	2014	2015
The Passover (Pesach – Nissan 14) Unlike the Jews, who used to kill the Passover lamb “at the twilight” of Nissan 14 (meaning in the evening towards Nissan 15), we, Christians, observe the Passover when our “Lamb” – Jesus Christ – was sacrificed. That happened on the afternoon of Nissan 14, before the twilight of Nissan 14, meaning that we keep it a little earlier than the Jews. We commemorate His death, not His supper, which occurred the previous evening, as some churches do; the time when His body was broken for us, not when He broke the symbolic bread.		25 March	14 April	4 April
Days of Unleavened Bread (Nissan 15 – 21) On the first and seventh days there shall be holy convocations. No customary work shall be done on these days.		26 Mar. – 1 April	15 April – 21 April	5 April – 11 April
Pentecost (Shavuot – Sivan 6)		15 May	4 June	24 May
Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah – Tishri 1)		5 Sept.	25 Sept.	14 Sept.
Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur – Tishri 10)		14 Sept.	4 Oct	23 Sept.
Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth – Tishri 15 – 22) On the first and the eighth days there shall be holy convocations. No customary work shall be done on these days.		19 Sep. – 26 Sep.	9 Oct. – 16 Oct.	28 Sept. – 5 Oct.

State of the World

Society and Culture

Wedding etiquette: The good, the bad and the just plain wrong

A COUPLE asking their guests to pay for their nuptials and another emailing a friend lambasting them for their stingy present - welcome to modern weddings gone wrong.

And those planning a wedding should take note - any unreasonable bridezilla behaviour cannot only ruin relationships but may also wind up on the internet quicker than you say "I do".

According to a leading Australian etiquette expert, bad wedding behaviour is becoming the norm, and weddings have gone from a celebration to a money-making event.

Asking people to help pay for the honeymoon and wedding is not only "tacky" but puts a price on people's relationships and could quickly turn a happy occasion into a shameless cash grab, experts say.

Good Manners founder Anna Musson said many couples were too focused on getting money as gifts. Often that cash is used to pay off the honeymoon, but it emerged this week that some couples are even hoping their whole wedding can be paid for by guests. American grooms Cesar Hernandez-Topete and Miguel Munoz made headlines when they created an account on GoFundMe.com, to raise money for their upcoming nuptials.

The Californian couple, who have been together for four years, created Our Big Gay Wedding, giving guests a range of options they can pay for, while those who give more than \$25 receive a special cake gift in return.

Ms Musson said this sort of behaviour was just tacky and completely inappropriate.

Acknowledging some couples may have everything they need, she said it was bad manners to insist on money for a present let alone pay for the entire wedding, while gift registers were plain lazy.

"Giving cash takes away the mystique of gift giving and thought," she said. "If you're that cash-strapped at least give guests an option to choose a gift rather than give money." She added if people did give cash, how much depended on what people could spare, rather than a set amount dictated by the happy couple. And while some etiquette experts say it is OK to ask for cash, so long as it's done properly, Ms Musson said the mention of money as a gift "infuriated" her to no end and should really be avoided at all costs unless it was accepted cultural practise such as Chinese or Jewish weddings.

But what if you were asked to pay to attend the wedding? That's what happened twice to Libby Collett.

"At the first wedding, it was an odd one as it was a joint wedding, which made me think maybe money was tight for the parents," she said. "We got a meal but we had to pay for our own drinks the whole way through so, between my boyfriend at the time and myself, we would have paid \$60 between us and then at the next one we had to pay for our meals (\$70 each) plus drinks, so maybe another \$50 or so."

"As a guest I was pretty bemused, but I know they are not wealthy people and they are pretty unconventional. I know it's not a lot of money, but it was the act of being asked to chip in that was pretty gross."

In terms of actual presents, Ms Musson said couples should never be ungrateful for gifts and definitely shouldn't send emails criticising guests for presents, as one Canadian couple did when they received a hamper of food as a wedding gift. These friends found themselves at the wrong end of the same sex couple's wrath after they gave the newlyweds what they thought was a thoughtful wedding basket of food with a card which read: "Life is delicious".

Unfortunately for them, the two brides were none too impressed with the gift with one asking to see the receipt.

One of the brides later sent them an email, which went viral saying that "People give envelopes. I lost out on \$200 covering you and your dates plate." But if you're still unsure of what to do when it comes to good wedding manners check out Ms Musson's tips for appropriate wedding behaviour.

Do:

- Thank guests for any gifts received - the fact they have thought to go out and get you something should be recognised
- Be happy someone has made the effort to come and celebrate your special day

Don't:

- Ask for money as a gift. If you have all you need don't ask for anything
- Place a monetary value on gifts, steer clear of gift registers and let people think of a present for you
- Request people pay for the honeymoon. If you can't afford it, go somewhere less expensive
- Ask guests to pay for the wedding itself. If you're that cash-strapped have a smaller event
- Put a cash value on presents
- Send guests rude email or Facebook messages with ungrateful messages or requests

(Debra Killalea, *The Telegraph*, July 12, 2013)

Talking divorce before tying the knot

Divorce can add a decade to your working life, according to a new study from an Australian super fund.

In a recent research report titled Untying the Knot, Suncorp Superannuation asked married and divorced people about retirement ages and found that while both groups were on par when it came to ideal retirement ages, there was a big gap when they had to be realistic. Married couples said retirement would be possible by the time they were 65, however divorcees said retirement would be unrealistic until the age of 75.

The report also used figures relating to the average age of divorce from the Australian Bureau of Statistics to demonstrate the very different financial positions of male and female divorcees. Most men divorce when they are 45 years old and have about

\$128,000 in super, while most women divorce at 42 with \$42,000. I'll let you cogitate on that, and the vested interests of the report's authors, for a wee moment before we continue.

Divorce. It happens. And it hurts. Divorce hurts in many different ways. It may be important to think of this before getting married. But is it a good idea? Is it smart to stop and think about things falling apart before building something up? Is it a good idea to contemplate the demise of a romance before taking it all the way, or will you simply kick-off some sort of negative, self-fulfilling prophecy of doom?

A lot of couples shirk the hard stuff for fear it will ruin things. I sometimes wonder whether this is a sign the foundations of their relationship are shaky at best. Surely strength comes from facing up to brutal truth, rather than stuffing cowardly fingers in ear and shrieking "cant-hear-you" in unison? Of course, there's always the likelihood that one person in a partnership may be better equipped to have the conversation than the other. This is an imbalance, but the difference is not always insurmountable. For we all know that romances work when people agree to support each other, and help each other learn and grow. It could simply be that some help through what would be a difficult conversation for anyone to have is necessary. If it's a conversation that needs to be had at all, that is.

Is it? Is talk of divorce before 'I do' going to strengthen or weaken your relationship?

Certainly there are practical benefits. Women especially need to wise-up when it comes to finances, and their financial security within relationships. The old idea women should rely solely on their husband to sustain themselves in perpetuity is partly responsible for the great many poor old ladies struggling to pay the bills as they age.

And while that idea is slowly dying, there's no use pretending all things are equal. Women still earn less than men in Australia. Women are still less proficient in the language of finance and less able to adopt a 'like a man' approach to money (read: More likely to take on unnecessary responsibility/charge their decisions with emotion, not reason). This is partly why I'm pro-pre-nup. It's not a harbinger of doom, in my books, but simply a sensible document related to a bunch of other documents you're about to sign, either literally through marriage or by default if you're de facto. But the cost of divorce isn't just financial. Divorce also rips apart families, and causes significant emotional trauma for all parties involved, especially when children are involved. I believe these are other reasons why it might be a good idea to discuss divorce before marriage, if only to underscore the sheer depth of your feeling for one another, and willingness to commit, even in the face of possible devastation. Don't you agree?

(Katherine Feeney, *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 9, 2013)

Why are girls starting puberty sooner?

Girls are starting puberty earlier, according to scientific research, and we're still not entirely sure why.

Puberty announces itself to girls with growing breasts and their first period. This process, fuelled by significant hormonal changes, is hard on girls no matter how mentally mature they may appear. In 1901, the median age for girls going through puberty was approximately 14 years and there was little difference among ethnicities. But things have changed. As Professor George Patton, of Murdoch Children's Hospital, said recently: "In the course of the 130 years, between 1830 and 1960, we saw a drop in the age of onset of periods from about 17 years down to about 12-and-a-half, 13 years."

Several factors have led to the earlier age of puberty. Most scientists agree that improved nutrition plays an important factor, as does the ability for children to develop with a degree of emotional, social and financial comfort.

However, with rates of puberty starting an additional two to four years earlier scientists are still trying to determine the cause. Danish research shows puberty is occurring even earlier, with many girls showing signs at just 10.

It has been argued that excess fat can affect oestrogen, so the researchers examined the relationship between age of puberty and obesity. They found that children aged seven with weight issues were more likely to enter puberty earlier. However, they also noted there was a universal trend towards premature puberty that could not be explained by obesity alone. Additionally, different ethnicities are now beginning to experience different pubertal rates, which may suggest social and economic inequality has a physical impact. This is a particular concern with for African-Americans, nearly 50 per cent of whom display signs of puberty at the age of eight. Environment is also considered a possible factor, with the presence of hormones, chemicals and pollutants showing an impact on the development of fish and animals. Professor Paton has said that this exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals is "one of the things people are speculating on".

Patton and his colleagues have been studying puberty and how it is changing in Australian children using the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children. One thing the team have discovered is a connection between childhood mental illness and early puberty. While many professionals believe early puberty can place mentally unprepared children under extreme stress, they are only just becoming aware that stress can also be a trigger for early puberty.

According to their research, Australian children who reach puberty early show problems with "emotional and social adjustment" from the age of four on. There is a suggestion this may be associated with disruption in the home or broader community. "What we found was that as early as the age of four these kids differ in their social and emotional profiles," Professor Paton told ABC Radio's AM program. "So they're having more difficulties at the age of four with anxiety, with unhappiness, with getting tense and not knowing what to do about it. They're having more difficulties with their peers, finding friends, with bullying, being included, as early as the age of four."

Patton and fellow researcher **Fiona Mensah** believe "early puberty may be part of an accelerated transition to adult development which begins early in life. This, in turn, heightens the risks for emotional and behavioural problems". So, while trying to recuperate from stress and hampered development as small children, the early onset of puberty complicates matters as unprepared children try to get used to physical change. Research into our falling rates of puberty is ongoing and further examination is required to try to uncover the mystery and factors in play for this biological development. This recent research, however, reinforces the importance of providing safe, supportive and healthy environments for children no matter their age. (Amy Gray, *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 10, 2013)

Anti-gay movement apologises, closes after 37 years

Washington: In perhaps the most startling example of the recent advances of the gay rights movement in America, one of the nation's most prominent religious opponents of homosexuality has dissolved itself, issuing a long and detailed apology for the harm it caused during its 37 years of existence. Exodus International was formed in 1976 after a conference of Christian ministries and since then has been a proponent of what the group has called "conversion therapy", which it claimed could "cure" people of homosexuality through prayer and psychotherapy.

During annual conferences sponsored by the evangelical group Focus on the Family and via local churches, Exodus recruited gays with the message: "The sin of homosexual behaviour, like all sins, can be forgiven and healed by the grace revealed in the life and death of Christ." The group was never without critics who said the so-called therapy caused little but confusion, distress and often despair. Studies found time and again that only a very small minority of those that sought to change succeeded - about 15 per cent, in one longitudinal study.

Exodus was embarrassed in 1979 when senior members Michael Bussee and Gary Cooper divorced their wives and left the group to be together. They eventually shared a commitment ceremony in 1982. It now appears that for more than a year Exodus International's leadership has been suffering a crisis of conscience. In January last year its president, Alan Chambers, told a Gay Christian Network conference 99.9 per cent of conversion therapy participants did not undergo a change in their sexuality.

Then in July he told *The New York Times* that virtually every "ex-gay" he had ever met still harboured homosexual cravings, himself included. On Wednesday, following a unanimous vote during its annual meeting, the group's leadership decided to dissolve, with Mr Chambers telling the gathering: "I am sorry for the pain and hurt many of you have experienced. I am sorry that some of you spent years working through the shame and guilt you felt when your attractions didn't change. I am sorry we promoted sexual orientation change efforts and reparative theories about sexual orientation that stigmatised parents." In an interview with *The Atlantic* magazine on Thursday, Mr Chambers said he still believed the organisation had done some good: "Exodus saved my life. I was vulnerable and I had no other place to go. I didn't know what the gay community was or how to find it. "It was a safe haven for this little kid of faith who needed an option." But he also said he understood why so many people were so angry with Exodus. "It's been traumatic for many people. It's been horrific," he said. "And it's not just Exodus. It's the church. It's a religious system that has taught us how to be contrary to the heart of Christ, to treat people who are sinners in ways that God himself wouldn't ever treat them." Response to the apology has been mixed.

"This is a welcome first step in honestly addressing the harm the organisation and its leaders have caused," Sharon Groves, director of the Human Rights Campaign's religion and faith program, told Associated Press. "Now we need them to take the next step of leadership and persuade all other religious-based institutions that they got it wrong." In response to a *Los Angeles Times* online report, a person wrote: "Thirty-seven years spewing lies, dealing in the commerce of guilt and self-loathing and the shame that comes from failing is more than a generation of ruined lives. Someone who went to Exodus international 37 years ago at 18, for example, would now be 55, with the best years of his or her life lost. There is no amount of apology that can repair those countless numbers of lives."

Mr Chambers remains married to his wife Leslie and told *The Atlantic* that his position against gay marriage had not entirely changed. "I don't really know what to think, honestly, when it comes to gay marriage," he said. "But I also don't think anybody needs me to have a position. People have a right to live their lives as they see fit."

The Supreme Court is expected to make two crucial decisions on gay marriage. In one it will rule on whether or not the federal Defence of Marriage Act, which forbids federal agencies from recognising gay marriage, is constitutional. In the other it will consider a ban on gay marriage in California. (Nick O'Malley, *SMH*, June 22, 2013)

Gay couples win landmark case

Just a generation ago it would have been ridiculous to suggest that the US federal government would soon recognise gay marriage, says Harvard constitutional law professor Michael Klarman.

On Wednesday morning it did just that, with the Supreme Court striking down not just the federal Defence of Marriage Act (DOMA), which defined marriage as between the two sexes, but also a Californian state law prohibiting gay marriage known as Proposition 8. Now, says Professor Klarman, there is little doubt that within the foreseeable future gays will be able to marry in every state in the union. "It is going to be all over in the snap of a finger," he says, before clarifying that he means in comparison to other social changes. A generation alive today will wonder that gay marriage was ever banned, he predicts. Professor Klarman, author of *From the Closet to the Altar: Courts, Backlash, and the Struggle for Same-Sex Marriage*, tells the story of the Supreme Court judge Lewis Powell, who in 1986 was the deciding vote in support of a now infamous decision to uphold a Georgian anti-sodomy law. While considering the judgment, Justice Powell told one of his clerks that he had never met a homosexual. He did not realise the clerk was gay. If he had known, says Professor Klarman, he might have found differently. "People want what is good for the people that they love or that they admire," he says.

As soon as gays started coming out, resistance to conferring upon them the rights enjoyed by fellow citizens began to wane. Further, once cases started to appear before the courts the momentum increased because while opposition to gay rights tends to be rooted in Old Testament doctrine, religious arguments cannot be mounted in court, says Professor Klarman.

On the forecourt of the Supreme Court, 1000 or more people stood in the heat and waited. When the news broke a cheer swept through the crowd. DOMA had just been struck down. A few minutes later Proposition 8 fell on procedural grounds. In scrapping DOMA, the court made it clear that states that do not recognise gay marriage will not be forced to. Nor did the court find a constitutional right of gays to marry.

But in the 12 states that do recognise gay marriage federal agencies will now recognise the institution, clearing the way for gays and lesbians to gain access to more than 1000 legal protections and benefits formerly denied them.

Gay marriage advocates say that the language in the decision striking down DOMA will assist them in fighting for the institution in states that do not yet recognise it. In a 5-4 ruling, Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote: "The federal statute is invalid,

for no legitimate purpose overcomes the purpose and effect to disparage and injure those whom the state, by its marriage laws, sought to protect in personhood and dignity.

"By seeking to displace this protection and treating those persons as living in marriages less respected than others, the federal statute is in violation of the Fifth Amendment."

Essentially the majority found the federal government cannot enact prejudicial laws without good cause.

In an angry dissent which he read from the bench - normally a sign of particularly strongly held views - Justice Antonin Scalia wrote: "That is jaw-dropping. It is an assertion of judicial supremacy over the people's representatives in Congress and the executive." Outside the court Michelle McLeod, who was drummed out of the US Navy in the late 1980s for her homosexuality, stood and wept. "I never thought we'd get gay marriage. I never even thought we'd get it in one state, let alone 12 and DC, and now the whole nation. I did not think it would happen in my lifetime," she said.

"The younger generation we have to thank for that [public change in attitudes towards gays]. They're more open-minded." Nearby, Michael and Shalom Konstantino, who are already married, were celebrating. They said the decision would have a huge impact on their lives, particularly in helping Shalom secure permanent residency.

"Not having our marriage recognised by the federal government - Shalom is a foreign national - this ruling means the world to us," said Michael, who met Shalom while he was working in the US embassy in Tel Aviv.

By early afternoon, Californian governor Edmund Brown said he had already acted to reinstitute gay marriage.

"Jesus wept", tweeted the conservative former presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee.

The Republican House Speaker, John Boehner, said he supported America's system of checks and balances, but defended his party's decision to spend \$US3 million defending DOMA in court.

"A robust national debate over marriage will continue in the public square, and it is my hope that states will define marriage as the union between one man and one woman," he said. Minutes after the rulings were announced, Kris Perry and Sandy Stier, the plaintiffs who challenged California's anti-gay marriage law, were in the middle of a television interview when their phone rang. It was the President. "We're proud of you guys and we're so proud to have this in California," said Barack Obama. "And it's because of your leadership things are heading the right way. So you should be very proud today." They invited him to their forthcoming wedding. (Nick O'Malley, *SMH*, June 28, 2013)

Rudd's big sister calls for gay ban in schools

KEVIN Rudd's sister wants Australia to introduce a Vladimir Putin-style ban on schoolchildren being taught about homosexuality. Loree Rudd - who says she is unlikely to help her brother on election day because she opposes his support for gay marriage - believes the Russian leader's hardline view is more enlightened than Western leader's opinions.

"It's like he (Putin) can see the problem ahead," said Ms Rudd, 62, who has just returned from a visit to Russia.

"I think that there should be a law (in Australia) protecting children from the propaganda of homosexuality as normal. They're trying to build their family life and structure in Russia and people in the West don't seem to understand our family life structures are breaking down. "I guess the bottom line, if there's one thing I can say that can't be challenged, it's that society needs to protect its children as best they can." Ms Rudd, a nurse on Queensland Sunshine Coast who once trained as a nun, revealed her brother rang her before he decided to go public about his decision to support gay marriage.

At first she figured Mr Rudd might "stick me near a church to help out" on election day but now she fears handing out flyers in his Brisbane electorate will be "hypocritical". "I don't think I will do anything on election day."

When he called her in May to say he had changed his mind on gay marriage, Ms Rudd told him she accepted his views but would not change her own. Ms Rudd rejoined the Labor Part last year after publicly tearing up her membership when the party voted to support a conscience vote on same-sex marriage. She has refused to apologise for describing some lobby groups as "the gay gestapo". A spokeswoman for the prime minister said he "respects the views of other people, including his sister". (Kieran Campbell, *Sunday Telegraph*, July 14, 2013)

Sacrifice survivor's second chance

A LITTLE boy who was brutally castrated and almost hacked to death by witch doctors in Uganda has been given a second chance thanks to the skill of Hunter surgeons. Allan Semeatya, 10, was snatched on his way home from school by men from his village three years ago. They castrated him, drained blood from his neck and then, in a final axe blow, tried to decapitate Allan so he could not identify them. Allan was found in the bushes later that night by a passer-by who heard his gurgling sounds. He was rushed to hospital and spent a month in a coma.

Allan was taken in by Kyampisi Childcare Ministries after his father had to sell their house to pay the medical bills. The charity found the family living in a slum, set them up with a new property and sent Allan to school.

Kyampisi arranged for Allan to come to Newcastle for surgery on his skull. The young soccer fan lost a piece of his skull in the attack and neurosurgeon Dr John Christie and plastic surgeon Dr Nick Moncrief donated their time to insert a plastic plate into the space and repair his scalp so hair will cover the scar. Allan had the surgery at John Hunter Children's Hospital last Thursday and is staying in Edgeworth before returning to Uganda. Allan is one of many children in the African nation who have been abducted for child sacrifice. To date, police have recorded about 30 cases but one report estimates up to 900 children are missing. Ritual sacrifice has long been a part of Ugandan culture but was mainly confined to animals. In recent years, a growing middle class is thought to have prompted a rise in child sacrifice.

The superstitious believe killing a child will bring them prosperity. The problem has been exacerbated after the neighbouring Tanzanian government cracked down on witch doctors and they fled to Uganda. The men who attacked Allan were arrested but never charged. Advocates would like to go through the courts but have no money for legal representation. Allan has some minor brain damage from the attack - he still has some seizures and reduced movement on his left side. He will also need

hormone replacement therapy as he grows. Pastor Peter Sewakiryanga, from the charity, said Allan and his family still bore the emotional scars of the attack but were healing. Allan liked to sing, dance and listen to his favourite song, I'm a Believer.

"Allan knows what happened to him very well," he said.

"Looking at him, there's no way he should be alive. It's a miracle they found him that night.

"It's a miracle he's alive," he said. Pastor Sewakiryanga said it was common to hear about missing children in Uganda and a lack of police resources made it hard to battle.

"There are lots of mothers every day in the news and their children are never found," he said.

"People do it in secrecy."

He said the child-sacrifice trend in Uganda was fuelled by poverty and ignorance.

"People are desperate," he said.

"They don't get there's no logic to it.

"If they see someone kill a child and get rich, then they will do it."

(Alison Bradley, *Newcastle Herald*, June 27, 2013)

The Decline and Fall of the English Major

In the past few years, I've taught nonfiction writing to undergraduates and graduate students at Harvard, Yale, Bard, Pomona, Sarah Lawrence and Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism. Each semester I hope, and fear, that I will have nothing to teach my students because they already know how to write. And each semester I discover, again, that they don't.

They can assemble strings of jargon and generate clots of ventriloquistic syntax. They can meta-metastasize any thematic or ideological notion they happen upon. And they get good grades for doing just that. But as for writing clearly, simply, with attention and openness to their own thoughts and emotions and the world around them — no.

That kind of writing — clear, direct, humane — and the reading on which it is based are the very root of the humanities, a set of disciplines that is ultimately an attempt to examine and comprehend the cultural, social and historical activity of our species through the medium of language. The teaching of the humanities has fallen on hard times. So says a new [report](#) on the state of the humanities by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and so says the experience of nearly everyone who teaches at a college or university. Undergraduates will tell you that they're under pressure — from their parents, from the burden of debt they incur, from society at large — to choose majors they believe will lead as directly as possible to good jobs. Too often, that means skipping the humanities.

In other words, there is a new and narrowing vocational emphasis in the way students and their parents think about what to study in college. As the American Academy report notes, this is the consequence of a number of things, including an overall decline in the experience of literacy, the kind of thing you absorbed, for instance, if your parents read aloud to you as a child. The result is that the number of students graduating in the humanities has fallen sharply. At Pomona College (my alma mater) this spring, 16 students graduated with an English major out of a student body of 1,560, a terribly small number.

In 1991, 165 students graduated from Yale with a B.A. in English literature. By 2012, that number was 62. In 1991, the top two majors at Yale were history and English. In 2013, they were economics and political science. At Pomona this year, they were economics and mathematics. Parents have always worried when their children become English majors. What is an English major good for? In a way, the best answer has always been, wait and see — an answer that satisfies no one. And yet it is a real answer, one that reflects the versatility of thought and language that comes from studying literature. Former English majors turn up almost anywhere, in almost any career, and they nearly always bring with them a rich sense of the possibilities of language, literary and otherwise.

The canon — the books and writers we agree are worth studying — used to seem like a given, an unspoken consensus of sorts. But the canon has always been shifting, and it is now vastly more inclusive than it was 40 years ago. That's a good thing. What's less clear now is what we study the canon for and why we choose the tools we employ in doing so. A technical narrowness, the kind of specialization and theoretical emphasis you might find in a graduate course, has crept into the undergraduate curriculum. That narrowness sometimes reflects the tight focus of a professor's research, but it can also reflect a persistent doubt about the humanistic enterprise. It often leaves undergraduates wondering, as I know from my conversations with them, just what they've been studying and why.

STUDYING the humanities should be like standing among colleagues and students on the open deck of a ship moving along the endless coastline of human experience. Instead, now it feels as though people have retreated to tiny cabins in the bowels of the ship, from which they peep out on a small fragment of what may be a coastline or a fog bank or the back of a spouting whale. There is a certain literal-mindedness in the recent shift away from the humanities. It suggests a number of things. One, the rush to make education pay off presupposes that only the most immediately applicable skills are worth acquiring (though that doesn't explain the current popularity of political science). Two, the humanities often do a bad job of explaining why the humanities matter. And three, the humanities often do a bad job of teaching the humanities. You don't have to choose only one of these explanations. All three apply. What many undergraduates do not know — and what so many of their professors have been unable to tell them — is how valuable the most fundamental gift of the humanities will turn out to be. That gift is clear thinking, clear writing and a lifelong engagement with literature.

Maybe it takes some living to find out this truth. Whenever I teach older students, whether they're undergraduates, graduate students or junior faculty, I find a vivid, pressing sense of how much they need the skill they didn't acquire earlier in life. They don't call that skill the humanities. They don't call it literature. They call it writing — the ability to distribute their thinking in the kinds of sentences that have a merit, even a literary merit, of their own. Writing well used to be a fundamental principle of the humanities, as essential as the knowledge of mathematics and statistics in the sciences. But writing well isn't merely a utilitarian skill. It is about developing a rational grace and energy in your conversation with the world around you.

No one has found a way to put a dollar sign on this kind of literacy, and I doubt anyone ever will. But everyone who possesses it — no matter how or when it was acquired — knows that it is a rare and precious inheritance. (Verlin Klinkenborg, *The New York Times*, June 22, 2013)

Dad Factor In Girls' Sex Habits

GIRLS whose dads are absent during childhood are more likely to be sexually promiscuous later in life, according to a new study. Researchers from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth quizzed 64 female students on their father-daughter bond and prompted them to answer various questions on sex, including condom use and frequency. They found those who had unstable or non-existent paternal relationships were more likely to lose their virginity at an earlier age and display risky sexual behaviours. (*TheTelegraph.com.au*, June 14, 2013)

Our art culture really stinks

Campion University holds up the beauty of Western civilisation against the filth of modern art. Such is the state of modern cultural sensibilities that piles of stinking poop presented as art in a prestigious gallery barely cause a ripple, so to speak. Been there, done that - from Marcel Duchamp's 1917 urinal and Piero Manzoni's 1961 can of excrement, sold as "Artist's S..." for \$170,000, to the artificial intestine at Hobart's Mona gallery, which manufactures fresh human faeces. The latest attempt at s... art was seen in Melbourne two weeks ago at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, where six performance artists emptied their bowels on transparent stools for the audience's viewing pleasure. "S... has a great truth to it," was the artist's explanation. Only a few philistines, such as Coalition Senator Eric Abetz, would question taxpayer money being used for publicly defecating all over stools in an art gallery. Clearly Abetz doesn't understand modern anti-aesthetics in which art is supposed to be ugly and soul-destroying.

As that pillar of the arts establishment Robyn Archer puts it: "When did the public start insisting that all art be 'beautiful'?" When? Only since humans emerged from the swamp. Beauty is an innate human desire. It's the impulse which brings out the best in us, to strive for the ideal, the transcendent, the good and the pure. But at some point in the past century, beauty became politically incorrect. Art came to revel in the dark side of humanity, wallow in the ugliness of life and aspire to nothing but the destruction of moral taboos. This has implications not just for art lovers but for our society, because beauty leads us to justice, truth and goodness. It shows us what makes human life worthwhile. This was the premise of a brilliant speech by Dr Ryan Messmore, the American-born president of Campion College, Australia's first Catholic liberal arts university, founded seven years ago in Sydney's west. "We decry the ugliness, vulgarity and coarseness of our culture, but it's no longer politically correct to teach what is beautiful," he said at a fundraising dinner at NSW Parliament House two weeks ago.

He drew on the work of Elaine Scarry, professor of aesthetics at Harvard University, who says our innate hunger for beauty creates the urge for justice. "Beauty inspires the desire in us to repeat it," he says. Thus comes the urge to take photographs of a beautiful thing, to stare at it and share it with others.

Beautiful objects also invoke in us a desire to protect them, which is why Scarry asserts that beauty is related to justice. Human beings are drawn to beauty, and will deliberately place themselves in its path, says Messmore, 38.

This is the basic impulse behind education. "We submit ourselves to teachers because beauty, goodness and truth are things we desire to safeguard, to protect and to pass on to others." Our western civilisation is the embodiment of much that is beautiful, good and true in human experience. Yes, that heritage has been "scarred at many points by ignorance, injustice, racism, wars and hideous forms of prejudice and persecution".

But there is something deep within the Western tradition that is "worth repeating, worth protecting, and worth passing on". Western civilisation gave us: parliamentarianism, constitutionalism, democracy, and the rule of law, vaccination, anaesthesia, antibiotics, calculus, statistics, formal logic, steam power, electric light, the combustion engine, the telegraph, telephone and television, the pen, the bicycle, the automobile, the aeroplane, the telescope, microscope, stethoscope, endoscope, quantum mechanics, the theory of relativity, thermodynamics, double entry bookkeeping, the limited liability company and the internet.

But deeper than these achievements is the essential "moral and ethical fabric of Western culture" shaped by Christianity and held together by certain virtues such as a "respect for human dignity, equality, mutual responsibility, neighbourly service, care for those in need, and hard work". Increasingly, however, the moral capital we inherited is running out, and one of the consequences is the dearth of "reflective responsible leadership" across the world. "How do we reclaim what is beautiful, good and true in modern society and mend the moral fabric of Western culture?" Messmore, who has degrees from Duke, Oxford and Cambridge universities, believes the answer is higher education. "I think in the modern West we need to be more honest with ourselves about whether what we are reaping culturally is directly related to what we are sowing educationally."

Historically, in the West, "the university was established and viewed as a central institution for training virtue and transmitting culture". But students today are driven more to get "a hunting licence for a job" at university than to pursue the "true, the good and the beautiful". Messmore, a Protestant convert to Catholicism, who brought his wife Karin and three young children to Australia last year to take charge at Campion, has injected a new energy and rigour into the young university in suburban Toongabbie. Campion's aim is "help keep alive what is beautiful within the Western tradition, ensuring that it is protected, replicated and shared with others".

It is proudly Catholic and unashamedly teaches the Western canon - asking students to study maths and science, along with history, literature, philosophy and theology. Its student numbers have built steadily to about 100, with students now coming from as far away as Perth. Campion's young graduates may be our best hope of turning back the culture of ugliness that finds its ultimate expression in faeces splashed around art galleries. (Miranda Devine, *The Sunday Telegraph*, June 02, 2013)

Science and the Environment

US cities seek greater climate resilience

US mayors pledged Monday to make their communities more resilient to increasingly severe floods, droughts, extreme storms and wildfires, which they said was more efficient and cost-effective than disaster clean-up afterwards.

Four dozen elected officials, from localities as diverse as Washington DC, Des Moines, Iowa and Santa Barbara County, California, released a one-page plan which laid out actions such as using more renewable energy and making buildings and infrastructure more energy-efficient.

The Resilient Communities for America Agreement was launched less than a week after New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced a \$US20 billion plan to prepare his city for rising sea levels and hotter summers.

The actions by local officials took place as anticipation builds that the White House is planning a series of executive actions in July to address climate. Federal action can help, but local officials are at the front lines of natural disasters, said Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie. Iowa's biggest city saw severe flooding in 2008, a trio of "500-year" floods in 2010, a drought in 2012 and the wettest year in 140 years of record-keeping so far in 2013.

"These extreme events are becoming more and more prevalent, and local government is really where it happens," Cownie said. He said Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) personnel sometimes are not on the scene until days after disaster strikes, when local officials have already gone ahead with recovery efforts without waiting for federal approval. "When they show up, it's good; they've got those T-shirts on with FEMA on the back, but they're just taking notes ... We need decision-makers in the throes of an event and we need them immediately," Cownie said.

El Paso Mayor John Cook said his desert city has been bombarded by wild weather since he took office: Three years' worth of rain arrived in one week in 2006, causing some \$US450 million in damage, while in 2011, El Paso's normally warm weather snapped cold, with temperatures below those of Anchorage, Alaska, for five days, straining local gas lines. El Paso has spent \$US100 million to make its buildings more efficient, installing solar panels on library roofs and improving mass transit, with buses that run on compressed natural gas, to cut down on fossil-fueled vehicle traffic. "The state of Texas should hang their head in shame," Cook said. "They don't have realistic goal-setting to use renewable energy." (*Reuters*, June 18, 2013)

Massive asteroid 1998 QE2 set to fly past Earth

An asteroid nine times larger than the QE2 is due to sail past the Earth on June 1.

Asteroid 1998 QE2, which is 2.7km long, and has been discovered in 1998, will be 5.8 million km from Earth.

Luckily, the giant space rock will get no closer than 5.8 million kilometres, or 15 times the distance between the Earth and the moon. The object makes its closest approach to Earth at 0659 AEST on June 1.

Coincidentally, scientists have named the asteroid 1998 QE2. The name has nothing to do with the transatlantic Cunard liner - it follows a code used for newly-discovered asteroids by the US Minor Planet Centre in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The asteroid is believed to be about 2.7km long, or nine times the length of the *Queen Elizabeth 2*.

It was discovered on August 19, 1998 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lincoln Near Earth Asteroid Research (Linear) program near Socorro, New Mexico. Scientists plan to scan it with radar using a 70m- wide dish telescope at the Goldstone Observatory in California's Mojave desert. Even from a distance of nearly 6.5 million km, the researchers expect to resolve features on the asteroid as small as 3.6m across.

Chief investigator Dr Lance Benner, from the American space agency NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, said: "It is tremendously exciting to see detailed images of this asteroid for the first time.

"With radar we can transform an object from a point of light into a small world with its own unique set of characteristics." The asteroid will not make a return trip to the Earth for at least another two centuries.

In 2016 NASA will launch a robotic sample return mission to one of the most potentially hazardous known near-Earth objects (NEOs), the asteroid (101955) Benu.

The asteroid, which measures a 480m across, comes within 500,000 kilometres of the Earth every six years.

Scientists have calculated that in 2182 there is a one in 1800 chance of the object colliding with the Earth.

In February, an asteroid 45m across passed within 27,400km of Earth - the closest known approach ever for a space rock of this size. Asteroid 2012 DA14 like a white streak, moving across against a backdrop of black sky.

Incredibly, less than 24 hours earlier a meteor exploded in the Siberian sky with the force of 20 atomic bombs, injuring more than 1,000 people as it blasted out windows and spread panic in Chelyabinsk, a Russian city in the Urals of 1 million.

* In the Shanxi Province of China in 1490 approximately 10 000 people were killed by 'falling stones' according to a Chinese record;

* The possibility of successfully navigating an asteroid field: 3720 to 1;

* NASA program dubbed NEAT (Near Earth Asteroid Tracking) monitors dangerous asteroids or NEO's (Near Earth Objects)

* In 1993 a fly-by from NASA's Galileo space probe of the asteroid 243 Ida revealed it had its own moon;

* The biggest known asteroid, Ceres, has a diameter of a whopping 952km ... it was also the first asteroid discovered;

* 3 collisions are said to have been responsible for mass extinction on earth; (*AAP/The Telegraph*, May 18, 2013)

Airbus comes close to crashing with UFO over Glasgow

A report by Britain's Airprox Board found the Airbus, with more than 200 people on board, was less than 10 seconds from smashing into the mystery object 3500ft above the suburbs of Scotland's biggest city, British media report. But investigators have been unable to explain the unidentified threat, which did not appear on radar.

The scare happened as the Airbus 320 came to land at Glasgow in sunny weather when both pilots saw an “object loom ahead at a range of 100metres”. The “blue and yellow object” whizzed under the plane without giving the crew any time to react. The shocked pilot radioed Glasgow Airport control tower: “We just had something pass underneath us quite close. Have you got anything on in our area?”

The tower replied: “Negative. We’ve got nothing on radar and we’re not talking to any traffic either.”

Both pilots gave the same description of the object which was blue and yellow, “bigger than a balloon” and with a small frontal area. After landing at Glasgow the chief pilot reported there had been a “high” risk of a collision with his jet. The pilots suggested the object may have been a glider or microlight, but investigators rejected this. They remain baffled by the incident. (*The Daily Telegraph*, May 01, 2013)

Extreme Weather

ABC Catalyst, July 4, 2013, TRANSCRIPT

This special report looks at the domino effect of environmental and atmospheric factors that drive the globe to wetter, hotter, drier and colder extremes.

NARRATION

Heat waves that kill tens of thousands. Apocalyptic floods. Blizzards in the Middle East. How is it that a slightly warmer atmosphere can create weather that swings from one extreme to the next? From lazy jet streams to baking soils, in this report we explain the mechanisms behind some of the most catastrophic events of the decade.

Anja Taylor

Understanding exactly how a warmer world drives weather wild is crucial to predicting just how bumpy a ride we're in for.

NARRATION

In 2003, a heatwave settled over Europe. But this was no ordinary heatwave. By the time it was over, more than 40,000 people were dead.

Dr Erich Fischer

So 2003 was remarkable in many aspects. It was far warmer than ever before - two to five degrees on average over the whole summer.

NARRATION

It was likely the hottest weather event in Europe in 500 years. Yet, just seven years later, an even more intense heatwave hit Russia, setting the country on fire. Summer temperatures reached up to 13 degrees above average, and the death toll from heat stress and respiratory illness was estimated at more than 50,000.

Dr Erich Fischer

It was much larger in spatial extent, so it covered almost two million square kilometres. Really, we're not that used to such extremely hot summers. So it is surprising to see a clustering of such strong events. It wasn't only the two, there were three other very warm summers within the same decade.

Anja Taylor

Global average temperatures have only increased by 0.8 of a degree Celsius. One would think that this would just lead to slightly warmer summers. But, actually, it's greatly increasing the chances of extremely hot weather.

NARRATION

This past year in Australia, we've seen plenty of heat. At the Bureau of Meteorology, forecasters have been watching record after record tumble.

Dr Karl Braganza

January was the hottest month on record. The summer was the hottest on record. And the sea surface temperatures around Australia were the hottest on record. We had temperatures in Bass Strait, south of Melbourne and south of Adelaide, up to six degrees above average. But, in terms of heatwaves, what we find is the elevated ocean temperatures reduce the amount of cold outbreaks we get. And, particularly during April, we had a prolonged heatwave with very hot night-time temperatures, and those sustained night-time temperatures are indicative of warmer waters to the south of Australia, and that's what we saw.

NARRATION

Although an exceptional year, it's not outside the range of what's now considered normal. If you plot temperature records, they fall in a typical bell-curve pattern, with the majority only a small deviation from the average, and the outliers representing extreme hot or cold events. With a 0.8 degree rise in temperature, a much larger portion now sits in the warmer-than-average section, and hot to extremely hot days are far more frequent.

Dr Karl Braganza

Suddenly, you've actually doubled the frequency of those events - and, in Australia's case, up to five times an increase in the frequency of extreme heat compared to the middle of last century. And that has all sorts of implications. Just in January alone, we did about 1,600 spot-fire forecasts. That's this very detailed forecast for the firefighters. And that's the equivalent of the last several years.

NARRATION

Worldwide, heatwaves have been increasing in duration and frequency since the 1950s.

Dr Lisa Alexander

What we thought as kind of exceptional in the past has really started to become the norm.

NARRATION

But even in the context of global warming, the European and Russian heatwaves are way off the charts. Is this just natural variability, or is something else happening to make temperatures soar? The Swiss Institute of Technology is a world leader in climate modelling. Here, Dr Erich Fischer has focused intensive research on the causes of the 2003 scorcher and other recent

severe heatwaves in Europe.

Dr Erich Fischer

What's mainly the key factor is always the atmospheric circulations, so there needs to be a high-pressure system in place to get such an extreme heatwave.

NARRATION

But there was something else they all had in common - dry soils.

Dr Erich Fischer

All of them were actually preceded by very dry conditions in the spring. So we think that these conditions were already preconditioning the later heatwave.

NARRATION

Low rainfall in the spring months led to an early and rapid loss of soil moisture. And dry soils can be a double whammy on an evolving heatwave.

Anja Taylor

When the sun's rays hit the land surface, a lot of their energy goes into evaporating moisture from the soil and from plants as they transpire. But when soils dry out and plants stop transpiring, the sun's energy is no longer channelled into that process. Instead, it's free to heat the surface.

NARRATION

The result is a jump in temperatures. It was dry soils that turned the European heatwave of 2003 into a deadly scorcher.

Dr Erich Fischer

With the very same conditions in the atmosphere, but wet soils rather than dry soils, the 2003 summer would have still been a very warm summer, but much less extreme, with much less devastating impacts.

NARRATION

An early snow melt and dry soils also amplified the Russian heatwave of 2010. What's disturbing is that many regions appear to be trending to patterns of lower rainfall in winter and spring months, making those areas more prone to mega heatwaves.

Dr Erich Fischer

Europe and central Europe was always thought to be always humid basically. So, it was a surprise that in that event more dry conditions was actually enough to amplify the heatwave - something that usually only occurs over dry regions, such as the Mediterranean or the central US or Australia, for instance.

Anja Taylor

From where I'm standing, heatwaves seem a long, long way away. So do dry soils. And although this summer has been the hottest on record, it's also had some torrential downpours. So how is it that it can be getting hotter, drier and wetter at the same time?

NARRATION

It's simple physics. When air gets warmer, it can carry more water vapour - much more. So any rise in temperatures should lead to considerably more moisture being sucked from the Earth's surface. But what goes up must eventually come down.

Dr Susan Wijffels

Rainfall, as we all know from personal experience, is really spotty. I mean, it can be raining, you know, in your suburb, and next door not raining at all. And so that spatial sort of graininess of rainfall makes it an incredibly hard thing to measure - and, in particular, to measure over larger areas accurately.

NARRATION

To find out if a warmer climate is cranking up the water cycle, scientists have been searching for clues in the restless, churning oceans.

Dr Susan Wijffels

Most of the evaporation and most of the rainfall in the world actually cycles through the ocean surface, not through the land. Because it covers 75 percent of the Earth, most of the action's actually happening over the ocean.

NARRATION

Every time rain falls or water evaporates from the sea, surface salinity changes.

Dr Susan Wijffels

When we look at the ocean salinity field right now, we see this beautiful reflection of what happens in the atmosphere. So the places that are very rainy - say, the Tropics, where there's a large amount of rainfall all the time - the surface salinity field is very fresh. When we go to the parts of the atmosphere where we find deserts on land, there are desert equivalents over the ocean, where evaporation dominates, and that's where we find the surface of the ocean is very, very salty.

NARRATION

Keeping track of how salty seas change, more than 3,000 ocean robots called 'Argo floats' have been bobbing about on the global currents, beaming back data over time. The oceans are always mixing, so results are smoothed out instead of patchy like land records. Argo data and long-term records from research vessels reveal an unmistakable trend.

Dr Susan Wijffels

Over the last 50 years, that contrast has gone up quite markedly. So, for instance, the Atlantic Ocean is becoming saltier and saltier and saltier. And the Pacific is becoming fresher and fresher. Essentially translates to the fact that the wet areas have become wetter and the dry areas have become drier.

NARRATION

The big surprise is how fast the change is occurring. For every degree rise in air temperature, the water cycle is intensifying by percent. That's double the climate-model predictions.

Dr Susan Wijffels

The intensity of the storms are likely to go up, because the moisture in the atmosphere is actually the feeder energy stop that

drives storms. And we expect droughts and floods to amplify as well.

NARRATION

And that's what's happening. These days, when it rains, it really pours. In January 2011, Toowoomba (in New South Wales) set a terrifying example of what can happen when too much water comes down too fast.

Man

The house... We are moving!

NARRATION

The town experienced an inland tsunami as 100mm of rain fell in under an hour.

Dr Lisa Alexander

You get very intense rainfall events in a very short period of time, like you did in Toowoomba. The soil just can't absorb that much water. And then you do start getting these very large inland flooding events.

NARRATION

By studying over 8,000 rain gauges across the world, Australian scientists have confirmed that extreme rainfall events have also been intensifying. That means we're getting more water from a big storm than we would have 30 or 40 years ago. Around 7 percent more per degree rise in temperature.

Dr Lisa Alexander

It surprised us all, I have to say, that we got the answer we expected. So... Because usually, in science, you don't always end up with the answer you expect. So, to sort of see this coming out consistently in the data, was... was somewhat of a surprise.

Dr Susan Wijffels

We're already starting to detect and see big changes in the extreme events. And we've only really warmed the Earth by 0.8 of a degree. If we were to warm the Earth by 3 or 4 degrees, the changes in the hydrological cycle could be near 30 percent. I mean, that's just a huge change, and it's very hard for us to imagine.

Anja Taylor

Well, that explains heatwaves and floods, but it doesn't take a genius to work out that higher temperatures don't set the scene for blizzards. In marked contrast to a sweltering March last year, this year the US suffered through nail biting cold. In fact, much of the Northern Hemisphere was buried under record-breaking snowfalls. How can global warming possibly explain that?

NARRATION

To understand how, you need to consider the basic drivers of climate. As the sun heats the Earth unevenly, it sets up temperature gradients on many different scales. These create the winds and currents that influence weather.

Dr Karl Braganza

All the ocean currents are driven by basically the temperature gradient between the Equator and the Pole, and it's the same in the atmosphere.

NARRATION

The atmospheric gradient between the Tropics and the Poles creates the major westerly winds called 'jet streams'. Wind rushes down a slope from a warm, puffed up atmosphere to a cold, compressed atmosphere.

Dr Jennifer Francis

The stronger that gradient, the stronger the force that that wind is being pulled by, if you will, and then, because the Earth is spinning, instead of flowing directly from the south to the north, it actually gets turned to the right by the spinning of the Earth.

NARRATION

These fast-moving wavy winds encircle the Northern and Southern Hemispheres and mark the divide between cold, polar air and warm, tropical air.

Dr Jennifer Francis

They swing north and then they swing south, and the weather that you experience is completely related to where you are relative to one of these waves.

NARRATION

But what happens when you mess with a temperature gradient? It's a hotly debated topic, and, right now, we're running an extraordinary real-world experiment by turning up the thermostat in the Arctic.

Dr Jennifer Francis

It's hard to get your mind around how fast the Arctic is changing. It's really mind-boggling - even to someone like me, who's been studying it for decades now.

NARRATION

The Arctic is warming faster than anywhere on Earth, largely to do with the feedback effect of melting sea ice. White, bright ice bounces the sun's rays back into space before they have a chance to warm the surface. But when a small rise in temperatures melts some of the ice, the dark ocean below is exposed. This absorbs almost all the sun's energy, and heats up, causing more ice to melt, leading to more warming and so on.

Dr Jennifer Francis

What we're seeing is the Arctic sea ice disappearing at just an amazing rate. This is the ice that's floating on top of the Arctic ocean. This past summer, it was half as big as it was only 30 years ago.

NARRATION

Research by Dr Jennifer Francis has shown that Arctic summers with a low sea ice extent leads to a gentler atmospheric gradient.

Dr Jennifer Francis

The force that's creating those winds in the jet stream is getting weaker as well.

NARRATION

Like fast-flowing mountain rivers meander when they slowly cross the coastal plain, Jennifer predicted a weaker, slower jet

stream would display a much wavier pattern.

Dr Jennifer Francis

We were able to determine that, in fact, these waves are actually getting larger in the north-south direction, which we know through weather theory that those waves then tend to move more slowly from west to east.

NARRATION

And a lazy, meandering jet stream can have an extraordinary effect on weather.

Dr Jennifer Francis

A big dip south, for example, will allow that cold air from the Arctic to plunge farther south. And, conversely, if you have a big swing northward in one of what we call a 'ridge', then that allows the warm, tropical air to extend farther northward. So, in both of these cases, we tend to get more unusual weather patterns setting up.

NARRATION

That's exactly what happened when frigid Arctic weather plunged into Europe and south-eastern US this March, bringing record snowfalls and leading many to wonder what happened to global warming. The year before, the US was caught in a jet-stream upswing. Unprecedented heat smashed over 1,000 temperature records and set the scene for a staggering drought and massive agricultural losses. This decade the Northern Hemisphere has seen some catastrophic results from a highly deformed jet stream. While a big, stagnant high settled over Russia in 2010, cold air from Siberia plunged into Pakistan, colliding with warm, wet air from the Bay of Bengal. As Russia burned, Pakistan drowned under a deluge that lasted nearly two months.

Dr Jennifer Francis

As the jet stream takes on this wavier character, what this means is that the weather that you're experiencing in your location is going to stick around longer. It's going to feel like those weather conditions just won't give up and bring something else. It feels like it's stuck.

NARRATION

How jet streams are being affected by a warming Arctic is still highly unpredictable, with many other interactions affecting their speed and movement. But one thing's certain - we'd better get used to wacky weather.

Dr Karl Braganza

And we talk about climate change in the future of 1, 2, 3 degrees - that's actually hard to imagine.

Dr Jennifer Francis

It's going to be a difficult next few decades, I think.

Anja Taylor

When it comes to extreme weather, the connection is pretty clear. The warmer the world, the wilder it gets. And, with the speed that emissions still enter the atmosphere, we're right on track for an unrecognisable future.

Others

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- Camera: Kevin May, Scott Ross, Jodi Silver, Anja Taylor, Dirk Frenkel
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[Frozen jet stream links Pakistan floods, Russian fires](#)

[Met office meeting about jet streams](#)

[Has global warming brought an early summer to the US?](#)

COMMENTS

Bob Fernley-Jones - 05 Jul 2013 2:27:13pm

I find it strange that there was no mention of disagreement anywhere that there is an implied association between extreme weather events and global warming, which is widely taken to mean AGW, (or CO2 emissions). Here follow some eminent examples of authoritative uncertainty:

1) The esteemed Nature journal advised in an editorial in Sep 2012 that for Extreme weather: Better models are needed before exceptional events can be reliably linked to global warming. See:

<http://www.nature.com/news/extreme-weather-1.11428>

2) The IPCC issued a major report (SREX) by 220 authors in March 2012. The 20-page Summary for Policymakers is here: http://www.ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/images/uploads/SREX-SPMbrochure_FINAL.pdf

EXTRACT: Confidence in projecting changes in the direction and magnitude of climate extremes depends on many factors, including the type of extreme, the region and season, the amount and quality of observational data, the level of understanding of the underlying processes, and the reliability of their simulation in models. Projected changes in climate extremes under different emissions scenarios generally do not strongly diverge in the coming two to three decades, but these signals are relatively small compared to natural climate variability over this time frame. Even the sign of projected changes in some climate extremes over this time frame is uncertain. UNQUOTE

3) The WMO (World Meteorological Organization). Has also recently expressed uncertainty here: http://library.wmo.int/pmb_ged/wmo_1119_en.pdf

EXTRACT: More complete datasets will be needed in order to perform robust analyses of trends in the frequency and intensity of these hazards. Distinguishing between natural climate variability and human-induced climate change will also require datasets that are more complete and long-term. UNQUOTE.

4) This from 1904 infers that Australia has always been a land of extremes, even before anyone heard of CO2: <http://www.lancescoular.com/my-country-by-dorothea-mackellar.html>

Bob Fernley-Jones - 05 Jul 2013 11:30:57am

An important message I saw was that the rapidly melting ice in the Arctic is causing climate disruption.

Dr Jennifer Francis: "What we're seeing is the Arctic sea ice disappearing at just an amazing rate. This is the ice that's floating on top of the Arctic ocean. This past summer, it was half as big as it was only 30 years ago."

What no one mentioned was that this assertion can only be based on satellite observations which have been available for only that short time. Also, no one mentioned the apparent significantly greater warming trend and higher temperatures in the 1920/30s, followed by a prolonged cooling. For instance, see the graph in this NASA article: http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Features/ArcticIce/arctic_ice3.php

Greenland is also an important focus in the Arctic, and there are several papers showing warmer conditions in the 1920/30s. For instance, see Chylek et al 2006.

http://88.167.97.19/albums/files/TMTisFree/Documents/Climate/Greenland_warming_of_1920%E2%80%931930_and_1995%E2%80%932005_Chylek.pdf

There are also many records of relatively ice free conditions back then, although lesser in scope at any one time. A mine of historical information can be found in this lengthy paper by researcher Tony Brown posted here. I don't recall any mention that Antarctic sea ice is increasing. Does this oppositely explain the climate disruption in the Southern Hemisphere?

MikeH - 05 Jul 2013 11:04:46am

An excellent program and in accord with the latest report of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) titled "The Global Climate 2001-2010, A Decade of Climate Extremes".

As the WMO report points out "The world experienced unprecedented high-impact climate extremes during the 2001-2010 decade, which was the warmest since the start of modern measurements in 1850 and continued an extended period of pronounced global warming. More national temperature records were reported broken than in any previous decade ..." http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/news/index_en.html

jeff - 05 Jul 2013 10:58:08am

Prof. Jennifer Francis (google up jennifer francis jet stream) has a plain layman's understandable youtube video (1hr.50min.) with all the in-depth data charts and analysis of them regards the Arctic amplification issues related to the jetstream. Maybe if all the denialists had a look they might actually learn something. Should be compulsory viewing. "robertscribbler" climate science/weather blog is also very informative.

Ken Stewart - 05 Jul 2013 9:29:51am

Much to criticise, but one item will do. Prof. Francis' explanation re: the slowing jet streams is plausible for the NH, but why did the catalyst team not question whether this happens in the SH? The south polar region (60S-85S) is not warming at all for as long as satellites have measured (plot your own graph from data at <http://vortex.nsstc.uah.edu/data/msu/t2lt/uahncdc.lt>). The tropic-polar gradient must therefore be increasing (the tropics are warming a little), the jet stream should be strengthening if anything, so SH extremes cannot be blamed on global warming. Professor Francis' explanation does not hold in the Southern Hemisphere. 1 out of 10 Catalyst- the 1 mark is for trying (very).

djw - 05 Jul 2013 1:57:38pm

I have given a reference to the title of the paper by Prof. Francis below. Try the URL:
www.vliz.be/imisdocs/publications/234818 to obtain it. Should be able to get a copy. It is technical, but importantly it gives references to the data sets used in determining the calculations. There is a web site:
<http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/psd/data/reanalysis/reanalysis.shtml>. That contains a wonderful resource for anybody who wishes to crunch some weather data. Also, she gives links to the sea ice data. Rather than spend time criticising, you have opportunity of obtaining a copy of the paper, getting hold of the data and crunching the numbers yourself. As does anybody else for that matter. I look forward to a future catalyst program when your contrary research is discussed. I know the SH is lacking in land mass relative to the NH but all the references to lengthy frigid weather was in the NH, i.e. Europe and Nth America; precisely the hemisphere where Francis' theoretically plausible hypothesis is likely to be more significant.

Anja Taylor - 05 Jul 2013 2:38:18pm

It is a valid and interesting point to raise Antarctica and the Southern Hemisphere jet stream changes but there's a limit to how much one can include in a story. The subject has also been covered in two earlier reports by Catalyst.

Antarctica is colder, larger and more isolated than the Arctic and is more resistant to warming. Secondly, atmospheric effects there are being complicated by ozone depletion. The scientific literature suggests that ozone depletion in Antarctica is cooling the polar stratosphere, owing to reduced absorption of ultraviolet radiation (Nature climate change http://www.nature.com/nclimate/journal/v1/n1/full/nclimate1065.html?WT.ec_id=NCLIMATE-201104). At the same time the troposphere is warming due to greenhouse gases. The thermal gradient change is leading to a poleward shift of the Southern Hemisphere jet stream. <http://www.southwestclimatechange.org/feature-articles/shift-toward-aridity>. The shift has direct consequences for weather here, because the jet stream determines the path of storms at mid and high latitudes. It can help explain lower rainfall in the southern regions of Australia, particularly south-west Western Australia. (Catalyst: Drought Vortex) The difference between the Southern and Northern hemisphere jet stream changes highlights the point that regions are affected by climate change in vastly different ways. Arctic amplification is just one effect, on one of the jet streams.

peter field - 05 Jul 2013 3:15:58am

Good report, my only criticism is the use of the term "inland tsunami". This term is unscientific and just plain wrong, so why use it? Alternatively, maybe you could give me the scientific definition of an "inland tsunami". I expect better from a science program.

Lazlo - 04 Jul 2013 11:23:08pm

Complete alarmist bull, unsupported by the consensus peer-reviewed literature. Even the IPCC report on extreme weather events (SREX) from 2011 could not draw the groundless long bows Catalyst tried to foist on us this evening. Catalyst should now be called the Junk Science Show.

MikeH - 05 Jul 2013 9:09:17am

The program was based around interviews with

Dr Lisa Alexander, Chief Investigator, Climate Change Research Centre, University of New South Wales

Dr Erich Fischer, Dept of Meteorology, University of Reading

Dr Karl Braganza, Manager, Climate Monitoring Section at Australian Bureau of Meteorology

Dr Susan Wijffels, Principal Research Scientist, CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research

Not a single climate crank was interviewed for the program. Expect the science deniers to scream blue murder.

john byatt - 05 Jul 2013 10:05:25am

UN extreme events last decade: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45330#.UdTbCflmiSo>

KiwiInOz - 05 Jul 2013 10:52:42am

You can repeat your head in the sand mantra as much as you like. It still doesn't make it true.

Anja Taylor - 05 Jul 2013 11:47:23am

Lazlo, If I based the extreme weather report on science literature available prior to 2011 it would be rather out of date. This is an intensive field of research and the knowledge base is increasing rapidly. The facts in this story come from peer-reviewed scientific literature published mostly in the last 12 months. Incidentally, Dr Lisa Alexander, who appeared in the program discussing her research on rainfall extremes and heatwaves, is a contributor to the upcoming IPCC report. Links to the science papers referenced in this story can be found above the comments on this page.

Dixon - 04 Jul 2013 10:29:16pm

I can't believe how uncritical this piece was. What are the criteria for extreme events? Where was the data showing these extreme events are increasing in frequency? Science is about the data, the facts. The explanation of the data is only the hypothesis being tested. You can do better!

KiwiInOz - 05 Jul 2013 10:55:35am

The presentation is reporting on published and validated research findings. Alternative explanations have been examined by scientists and found to be lacking. It would make as much sense for Catalyst to talk about geocentric theory.

Ray Manta - 04 Jul 2013 10:23:48pm

An excellent report that should be compulsory viewing, especially for those who point to the colder extremes to deny the evidence of warming. Anja and the Catalyst team have shown quite dramatically the exponential effects that even a 0.8 degree rise has on the climate bell curve. The wild ride has already begun.

djw - 04 Jul 2013 9:35:41pm

I have a weather background, albeit that I am out of it now; the politics of it is very unappealing. However this is without doubt the best analysis of this complex problem that I have heard/watched. The commentary at the end regarding the slowing of the weather pattern is a very plausible one. You can hunt down a copy of the paper off the Internet [it is technical], the paper is entitled 'Evidence linking Arctic amplification to extreme weather in mid-latitudes' by Francis and Vavrus.

Verification of temperature forecasts show, when people bother to look at them and interpret them, that the short term computer models consistently over forecast temperatures when it rains and/or is mostly cloudy. It is very difficult to believe that the climate models won't have a similar bias. Hence the models have a strong likelihood to be forecasting higher average temperature rises than is likely to happen and this might be one reason why the actual numbers aren't rising as expected. It is sensible to refer to 'climate change' and not 'global warming'.

This program should be aired to a wider audience than this country alone. Really well done.

(Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Catalyst Program, July 4, 2013)

Economics

Et Tu, Bernanke?

For the most part, Ben Bernanke and his colleagues at the Federal Reserve have been good guys in these troubled economic times. They have tried to boost the economy even as most of Washington seemingly either forgot about the jobless, or decided that the best way to cure unemployment was to intensify the suffering of the unemployed. You can argue — and I would — that the Fed's activism, while welcome, isn't enough, and that it should be doing even more. But at least it didn't lose sight of what's really important. Until now.

Lately, Fed officials have been issuing increasingly strong hints that rather than doing more, they want to do less, that they are eager to start "tapering," returning to normal monetary policy. The impression that the Fed is tired of trying so hard got even stronger last week, after a news conference in which Mr. Bernanke seemed quite happy to reinforce the message of an imminent reduction in stimulus. The trouble is that this is very much the wrong signal to be sending given the state of the economy. We're still very much living through what amounts to a low-grade depression — and the Fed's bad messaging reduces the chances that we're going to exit that depression any time soon. The first thing you need to understand is how far we remain from full employment four years after the official end of the 2007-9 recession. It's true that measured unemployment is down — but that mainly reflects a decline in the number of people actively seeking jobs, rather than an increase in job availability. Look, for example, at the fraction of adults in their prime working years (25 to 54) who have jobs; that [ratio](#) fell from 80 to 75 percent in the recession, and has since recovered only to 76 percent.

Given this grim reality — plus very low inflation — you have to wonder why the Fed is talking at all about reducing its efforts on the economy's behalf. Still, it's just talk, right? Well, yes — but what the Fed says often matters as much as or more than what it does. This is inherent in the relationship between what the Fed more or less directly controls, namely short-term interest rates, and longer-term rates, which reflect expected as well as current short-term rates. Even if the Fed leaves short rates unchanged for now, statements that convince investors that these rates will be going up sooner rather than later will cause long rates to rise. And because long rates are what mainly matter for private spending, this will weaken growth and employment.

Sure enough, [rates have shot up](#) since the tapering talk started. Two months ago the benchmark interest rate on 10-year U.S. government bonds was only 1.7 percent, close to a historic low. Since then the rate has risen to 2.4 percent — still low by normal standards, but, as I said, this isn't a normal economy. Maybe the economic recovery will, as the Fed predicts, continue and strengthen despite that increase in rates. But maybe not, and in any case higher rates will surely mean a slower recovery than we would have had if Fed officials had avoided all that talk of tapering. Fed officials surely understand all of this. So what do they think they're doing? One answer might be that the Fed has quietly come to agree with critics who argue that its easy-money policies are having damaging side-effects, say by increasing the risk of bubbles. But I hope that's not true, since whatever damage low rates may do is trivial compared with the damage higher rates, and the resulting rise in unemployment, would inflict.

In any case, my guess is that what's really happening is a bit different: Fed officials are, consciously or not, responding to political pressure. After all, ever since the Fed began its policy of aggressive monetary stimulus, it has faced angry accusations from the right that it is "debasing" the dollar and setting the stage for high inflation — accusations that haven't been retracted even though the dollar has remained strong and inflation has remained low. It's hard to avoid the suspicion that Fed officials, worn down by the constant attacks, have been looking for a reason to slacken their efforts, and have seized on slightly better economic news as an excuse. And maybe they'll get away with it; maybe the economic recovery will strengthen and all will be well. But rising interest rates make that happy outcome less likely. And now that everyone knows that the Fed is eager to slacken off, it will be hard to get interest rates back down to where they were. It's sad and depressing, in both senses of the word. The fundamental reason our economy is still depressed after all these years is that so many policy makers lost the thread, forgetting that job creation was their most urgent task. Until now the Fed was an exception; but now it seems to be joining the club. Et tu, Ben? (Paul Krugman, *International Herald Tribune*, June 23, 2013)

Saudi bank warning: U.S. debt ratio same as Italy's

ABU DHABI — Saudi Arabia has warned the financial community of a decline of the U.S. dollar.

Saudi Arabia's National Commercial Bank said the debt burden of the United States has reached the same ratio of Italy, deemed a default risk. In a report, the Jeddah-based bank warned that the downgrade of the U.S. credit rating from triple A status would reduce energy demand and prices, a move expected to harm the Saudi kingdom.

"Foreign central banks maintain a large share of their foreign currency reserves in U.S. treasuries because it is the deepest and most liquid bond market," the report said. "But, international funds that limit their investments to AAA-rated bonds may dump the U.S. holdings, causing the U.S. dollar to depreciate. Yet, mutual fund investment guidelines do retain some flexibility regarding the handling of such matters." The report, titled "The Standard and Poor's Downgrade of U.S. and Its Implications on the Saudi Economy," however, said the Gulf Cooperation Council state could withstand the decline of the U.S. dollar. NCB said Saudi Arabia wielded a large reserve to ensure government programs over the next few years.

Saudi Arabia is said to hold about \$492 billion in U.S. debt. The report said Washington was certain to honor its obligations, and that the United States could print money at any time. "Therefore, holders of U.S. Treasury bills like Saudi Arabia should not be concerned that they may not receive interest payments on U.S. bonds." The report, released on Aug. 10, said. "However, the value of those payments will essentially decline, given the fact that with more dollars in circulation due to the printing presses, the value of each dollar by definition declines." The report urged Riyadh to move its assets from the United States to other countries. Still, the bank expected investors to continue to support the U.S. currency amid the decline of the bond markets in Italy and Japan. "It is true that political system in recent months has demonstrated gridlock, diminishing its political will, but the status of the U.S. dollar as the global reserve currency will continue to provide the U.S. with a significant advantage no other economy enjoys," the report said. (WorldTribune.com , December 24, 2012)

Dangers of falling for a pretty face

Here's a quick pop quiz. What do former Miss Universe Jennifer Hawkins and TV gardener Jamie Durie have in common? And what on earth are they doing in the business pages? Answer: both have used their celebrity profile to help market investments.

Durie appeared in videos promoting LM Investment Management, a Gold Coast fund manager that went into administration in March. Hawkins helped spruik Myer's float to investors in 2009, her image splashed across its marketing campaign. The company's share price has never recovered to the \$4.10 level where it opened on its first day of trading. There's no suggestion either of them did anything wrong. And in any case, this isn't a rant against celebrities promoting financial products, it's an economics column. So what can celebrity endorsements possibly tell us about the dismal science? Well, quite a bit, as it happens. When we make financial decisions - especially important ones like how to invest our savings - economics assumes that we act as human calculators, carefully weighing up the pros and cons.

This assumption has informed government regulation of financial products, which has focused on forcing firms to disclose ever-expanding amounts of information. But there's now a growing recognition that this approach can be deeply flawed. The chief executive of Britain's Financial Conduct Authority, Martin Wheatley, recently highlighted just how shallow we can be when making financial decisions. In an April speech, he cited an infamous experiment where researchers sent out a range of brochures promoting personal loans, each with a different interest rate, with a variety of pictures on the front. The results speak for themselves. "Those that went out with a picture of an attractive woman on the front were shown to command a significantly higher interest rate - 24 per cent a year higher - perhaps because the human mind, in both male and female respondents, links the attractive person to an attractive product," Wheatley said. This is not an isolated case. A growing body of research shows many of us are pretty superficial when making big financial decisions. "We do not carefully evaluate data or analyse statistics in reaching important economic decisions. Nor do we weigh up the evidence in exquisite detail," Wheatley said.

Whether it's falling for a celebrity endorsement or some other gimmick, these all-too-human traits have been exploited since the year dot by salespeople. Fortunately though, behavioural economics is now shining a light on how these tricks work, and what we can do to minimise their negative impacts. In the jargon, our tendency to trust someone we like the look of is known as the power of "social influence". When confronted with complex concepts like future rates of return, or trying to estimate how much income we'll need in several decades, many of us are overwhelmed. It can be tempting to outsource the decision to someone we trust, and research shows we are often influenced by how likeable the salesperson is. Or indeed, a celeb acting as a "brand ambassador". This vulnerability to social influence is just one of many "biases" in our decision-making that make us far less than rational. Others include a tendency to be overconfident, to fall back on "rules of thumb", or to oversimplify by focusing on the headline interest rate. So what can be done to save us from ourselves?

This is where there is some encouraging news. In the past, authorities assumed we were rational beings and designed the rules accordingly, with a heavy emphasis on disclosure by companies. But a spate of cases where people were sold clearly inappropriate products has forced regulators to pay attention to some lessons from behavioural economics. Take the response to Banksia, a Victorian finance company that collapsed last year, inflicting losses on thousands. The company was regulated by the corporate watchdog, not the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, which monitors banks. This meant it didn't have to meet capital rules. Instead, it had to disclose its capital levels and give an explanation if benchmarks weren't being met. The chairman of APRA, John Laker, this month described the disclosure as "quite ineffectual". Laker's department is now restricting use of banking terminology such as "at call" accounts by finance companies because disclosure alone wasn't enough. Financial advice is another industry facing new rules influenced by behavioural economics. In the past, some advisers benefited from peoples' inertia, collecting annual fees without doing much at all. But from July, they will have to send notices requiring customers to "opt in" to paying their fees every two years. True, none of this will stop people falling for old tricks like celebrity endorsements. But it's a start. (Clancy Yeates, SMH, June 17, 2013)

Greece hopes errors may mean less pain

The international lenders overseeing Greece's bailout were back in Athens on Monday for their latest audit, as Greek officials hope dissent in the lending group might allow them new negotiating room.

It was the first time high-ranking representatives of the troika - the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the European Central Bank - have assembled here since an IMF report last week conceded it had made mistakes in Greece's first bailout. The report prompted angry reactions from the European Commission, not to mention Greek citizens weary of years of recession and austerity measures imposed by the lenders.

Finance Minister Yannis Stournaras met the foreign envoys for the first in a series of talks expected to focus on Greek pledges for lay-offs in the civil service, an overhaul of the dysfunctional tax collection system and the status of a slow-moving effort to raise money by selling state assets. Athens is obliged to show progress on those and other commitments to secure a tranche of €3.3 billion (\$4.34 billion) in rescue loans scheduled to be dispensed this month.

A ministry official described the first meeting as "an exchange of views about where we are and how we see things ... All issues remain open". Having arranged two bailouts for Greece worth a combined €240 billion over the past three years, the troika has been handing out the aid in instalments in exchange for the country's adopting economic changes and hitting austerity targets. Many Greeks have protested against those measures, which have helped slash living standards as the country enters its sixth year of recession and have played a part in an unemployment rate that has reached 27 per cent. Greek officials hope the string of errors highlighted in the IMF's internal report might prompt the troika to ease demands for more painful reforms. The report concluded that the fund made serious miscalculations and failed to anticipate the severity of Greece's economic downturn. The IMF's admission has given Greece some "negotiating power", Mr Stournaras said at the weekend. Among the concessions he is expected to seek is the lowering of the value-added tax on restaurants and taverns - to 13 per cent, from 23 per cent - as a way to lighten the burden on small businesses and help the crucial tourism sector, which is forecasting a record year of 17 million foreign visitors. Government officials are also expected to ask for a reprieve in the approximately 2000 lay-offs in the civil service that the troika wants to see over the summer. Athens fears that protests and transport strikes would hamper tourism. Greece had committed to dismissing 4000 public sector workers this year and an additional 11,000 in 2014. Even after those cuts, the number of Greek civil servants would be more than 600,000, compared with about 3 million working in the private sector. Other issues likely to be discussed are an expected funding gap of €4.6 billion for financing the bailout program in 2014 and measures that will be taken to cover the shortfall. Also on the table might be discussion of how likely it is that international creditors might be forced to take some losses on their holdings of Greek debt next year to ease the country's financial burden. Another big topic on the agenda is Greece's huge untapped potential for privatising government-owned assets. (Niki Kitsantonis, *New York Times*, June 12, 2013)

US shale glut changes coal export game

Origin Energy managing director Grant King has warned that the global fallout from the US shale oil and gas revolution will increase pressure on Australian coal exporters.

The glut of US gas is threatening to choke off further expansion of the local gas export sector, beyond what is already under construction. Cheap gas in the US is forcing more US coal into export markets - in Europe and Asia - which has cut across export growth prospects for much of the local coal industry, Mr King told a conference in Sydney on Friday. Developers of export gas projects in Queensland, for example, were already beneficiaries of the changes unfolding, with an increase in labour availability as coalminers retrench staff and contractors. The shale revolution has catapulted the US to a cheap manufacturing centre, with "implications for Europe", which is increasingly uncompetitive especially with high energy prices.

In the Australian coal industry, several planned expansion projects and proposed new mines are now not expected to proceed. The withdrawal of capital from the coal projects has resulted in "much more labour available" for the export gas projects being developed in Queensland.

Mr King said Europe was "struggling with the high level of subsidies required" to sustain its renewables energy sector, in areas such as wind and solar energy. "Spain is largely bankrupt due to subsidies" on renewable energy. "Europe's economic circumstances are increasingly uncompetitive. Subsidies will be withdrawn," he said, arguing that the "global consensus" in favour of a price on carbon no longer existed.

Despite criticism over the high cost of developing export gas projects in Australia, Mr King said the projects now being planned in the US would be only slightly less expensive, although the US did have the advantage of using existing infrastructure, which needs to be reconfigured from, for example, import to export terminals.

With the US benefiting from falling energy prices, electricity prices in Australia will rise further unless renewables energy schemes are revised, Mr King said. The high cost of the household solar subsidy in Australia, which the Queensland Competition Authority estimated at \$200 a household a year will "need to be reversed ... inevitably".

US coal export capacity could more than double to about 400 million tonnes by the end of the decade, with most of that growth aimed at the Asian market. ([Brian Robins](#), SMH, June 1, 2013)

National

What world leaders earn

Britain: David Cameron, \$231,000
United States: Barak Obama, \$436,000
Russia: Vladimir Putin, \$188,500
China: Xi Jinping, just over @21,000

What Australian leaders earn

Prime Minister: Kevin Rudd, \$507,000
Leader of the Opposition: Tony Abbott, \$352,517.
NSW Premier: L Barry O' Farrel, \$278,914
NSW population: 7,200,000
Queensland Premier: Campbell Newman, \$398,271
Qld. population: 4,500,000+
(*Sydney Morning Herald*, July 10, 2013)

Update: After the September 2013 Federal Election, this is what our new politicians are receiving.

1. **Warren Truss**, Deputy PM and Minister for Infrastructure & Regional Development: \$400,016
2. **Joe Hockey**, Treasurer: \$365 868;
3. **Julie Bishop**, Foreign Affairs: \$336,599;
4. **Peter Dutton**, Health: \$336,599;
5. **Eric Abetz**, Employment: \$360,842;
6. **Barnaby Joyce**, Agriculture: \$336,599;
7. **Christopher Pyne**, Education: \$341,477;
8. **Malcolm Turnbull**, Communications: \$336,599;
9. **David Johnson**, Defence: \$336,599;
10. **Scott Morrison**, Immigration: \$336,599;
11. **Peter Cosgrove**, Governor General, \$394,000;
12. **Bronwyn Bishop**, Speaker of the House of Representatives, \$420,000.
(*The Daily Telegraph*, Sept. 17, 2013)

Australia's roads are paved with gold for politicians. But the road to hell is paved with gold too.

Jas 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

Jas 2:6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?

Jas 2:7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

Jas 5:1 Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you*!

Jas 5:2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

Jas 5:3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

Jas 5:4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Jas 5:5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

Jas 5:6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

Jas 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

Jas 5:8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Mat 11:7 As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see?"

Mat 11:8 A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses.

Mat 11:9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.

Mat 11:10 For this is *he* of whom it is written: 'behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'

Mat 11:11 "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Anger over MPs' pay rise

Three months after the nation's federal politicians were given hefty pay increases, MPs and senators have received another 3 per cent pay rise, a figure almost double the official inflation rate.

Independent Senator Nick Xenophon has called for the pay increase to be scrapped immediately.

The boost to polities' pay packets comes two days after ministers Martin Ferguson and Simon Crean told reporters in Canberra that current union wage demands should be granted only if productivity output was assured.

The independently administered Remuneration Tribunal approved the pay increases in March, with the new salary scheme kicking in last Sunday. The increase means a backbencher will get an extra \$106 a week, taking their salary to \$190,550. Combined with the massive pay rise MPs received in March, the annual salary of a backbencher has increased by \$49,640 compared with a year ago – about \$1000 a week.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard's salary rises by \$14,430 to \$495,430, meaning she is earning a whopping \$129,064 more than she was a year ago – or almost \$2500 extra a week. Opposition Leader Tony Abbott receives a \$10,267 increase, taking his annual salary to \$352,517. Mr Abbott is an impressive \$91,834, or \$1766 a week, better off than he was year ago.

Although pay rises for politicians almost always coincide with an outbreak of bipartisanship, at least two officials have criticised the decision. Greens leader Christine Milne saying the money would be far better spent on the nation's most vulnerable. "When the government is saying it can't afford to give people struggling on Newstart an extra \$50 a week to just get up to liveable levels, and the minimum wage has only gone up \$17.10 a week, a \$100-a-week pay rise for politicians is hardly appropriate," she said. "If the nation can afford this, it can certainly afford to help our poorest people." Senator Xenophon has gone further, calling for the pay increase to be scrapped immediately.

He said the pay rise had come at the "worst possible time" and will fuel public anger towards MPs.

On average, politicians were awarded a \$5550 a year pay rise, just three months after they pocketed an on-average \$44,000 annual salary boost. "There is no such thing as a good time for a politician's pay rise, but this comes at an especially bad time. It's just embarrassing," the South Australian senator said in a statement.

"Coming less than a week after the parliamentary paralysis in relation to asylum seekers, and only a few days after the introduction of the carbon tax, this will only fuel public anger at politicians generally."

Finance Minister Penny Wong defended the salary process, in which a tribunal sets politicians' pay independent of Parliament. "Every time there's any discussion about politicians' salaries ... you usually get a whole range of questions," she said. "I think that the best way to deal with it is the way we've tried to deal with it, which is to take politicians out of the equation and to give it to an independent tribunal, and they set politicians' salaries."

Treasurer Wayne Swan - whose salary has increased from \$288,865 to \$390,627 over the last 12 months - said MPs were generally prepared for the negative reaction when news of politicians' bigger paypackets emerged.

He said it was "normal" for salary increases to be linked to rises in the consumer price index and that it was a situation that was repeated across the general workforce. "There are people out there who will always say that any rise politicians get is not deserved," Mr Swan said. Senator Xenophon said he would continue to campaign for the tribunal to hold public hearings. "It would also give polities a chance to justify any change in pay," he said.

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott briefly touched on his new pay packet during a media call at a cordial manufacturer in Adelaide. "I never forget that the taxpayers in Australia pay my salary. That's why every day I am working for their benefit," Mr Abbott said. "Right now, I am working to save them from a carbon tax. That's how I justify my salary, by working for the benefit of the Australian people every day, by saving them from this toxic tax, this bad tax based on a lie."

The decision had its defenders, with former Labor factional powerbroker Graham Richardson saying today he believed politicians should receive far greater financial reward. "If you look around a couple of hundred companies, I wonder how many of them pay their chief less than a half a million dollars?" Mr Richardson told the Seven Network.

"I think the answer would be none. "The Australian Prime Minister should be getting a minimum of \$1 million and ministers should be up around half a million, and you should be taking backbenchers up to \$250,000 to \$300,000. "There are 25-year-old kids walking around in merchant banks these days earning \$300,000 a year."

Independent MP Rob Oakeshott said he'd support linking future pay rises to the parliament's success in resolving pressing issues such as the asylum seeker issue. "I guess I can fully understand the mood of the moment that maybe we should link any pay rise, or any pay, to productivity. How about a resolution to the asylum seeker issue and then we get our pay rise? "I don't think anyone earned their keep last week. If a prime minister or an independent tribunal wanted to link a resolution to a handful of issues, one of them asylum seekers, to any future pay and conditions, I'd be up for that." Treasurer Wayne Swan - whose salary has leapt from \$288,865 to \$390,627 over the last 12 months - said MPs were generally braced for the blowback when news of politician's bigger paypackets emerged. He said it was "normal" for salary increases to be linked to rises in the consumer price index and that it was a situation that was repeated across the general workforce. "There are people out there who will always say that any rise politicians get is not deserved," Mr Swan said. (Jessica Wright, *SMH*, July 4, 2013)

Comments

Common' CEOs left and right and centre are getting pay rises despite their companies share prices under performing. So why not give the politicians more money for doing a poor job. *Steve*. Sydney, July 04, 2012

Pay rises for poor productivity/performance seems to be the norm, except for the average worker who will endure subjective annual performance reviews from less than competent managers who have been directed by senior managers to keep bonus and

salary increases down. Pay rises for politicians and public servants is really not a good look in this 2 speed economy. We're seeing companies folding and workers laid off on a daily basis, these people are worried about getting another job and how they'll pay the rising bills/mortgage etc and then they have to read an article like this. *Sunny*, Sydney, July 04, 2012

Sure, I'm happy to pay polities well...assuming they do a good job.
Simply giving these idiots more money won't magically make them any better. *taxed to death*, July 04, 2012

Steve - I note your heavy sarcasm but please note CEOs are being paid by their shareholders and can be sacked at any time. How do we sack politicians other than at general elections? We taxpayers do not have a say as to how much they are paid. Richardson should just shut his big mouth. What do backbenchers do other than toe the party line? This "independent" tribunal is a load of crap. Backbenchers pay should be tied to the average Australian salary. *Hbloz*, July 04, 2012

Why do we not want to pay adequately to attract talented people in the politics who are responsible for making decisions worth billions of dollars. Look at the CEO of companies like Telstra, Qantas and others who have or are performing so badly and still get not only huge pay packets but also huge bonuses. Why should a minister get paid less than his own Departmental Head? Put aside the shock jocks who themselves are getting huge pay packets and bonus, it is time we pay our politician well. Otherwise, the saying goes, you pay peanuts and you get monkeys. *Prakash*, Sydney, July 04, 2012

Under performing CEO's are no longer getting pay rises and neither should polities. Especially after the recent non achievements. *Peter A*, North of Sydney, July 04, 2012

What a lot of people are forgetting is that those big jumps in salary were supposed to be for doing away with other privileges and perks received with the job. Unfortunately only a few token perks were removed and only after leaving politics. In all reality these elected representatives don't have to spend much of anything on, well, anything. Everything is paid for right down to their offices, staff, accommodation away from home, education, arguments, advertising, mail, transport, petrol, food, meals, massively discounted booze, flights, and anything else they can dream up an indiscretionary salary for. And the silence from the opposition on this one is quite deafening... *John Michaels*, Offshore, July 04, 2012

The argument that the public sector should get paid more in line with the private sector does not stack up.

Many top performing firms in the private sector have stringent academic requirements and have departments dedicated to attracting people who can achieve. These people, should they make it through the selection process, either fail or succeed, those that fail usually get found out. Show me the educational requirements or otherwise that are necessary to join a political party? Oh that's right, there are none. Show me the bureaucrats in the civil service that leave to go and earn more money in the private sector because they are so talented?When you join the public sector, who are you in competition with? There is no consequence for underperformance in the public sector and there is enormous job security. This is the trade off for lower pay. An easy life. *Rossco*, July 04, 2012

Sunny, I'm not sure where you're getting this information about public service pay increases. The department I work for (like many) has had its budget slashed and a large portion of our workforce has been made redundant. *Deesby*, July 04, 2012

Who the hell is this "independent tribunal"?
How do I become a member? *The Oracle*, Oberon, July 04, 2012

Payback for the bad apples of Parliament

Politicians complain they are overworked and underpaid – it's time Australia's public servants fulfilled credentials. So you want to be a federal politician?

OK then, once you've negotiated the snakes and ladders of preselection, once you've pledged your allegiance to one or any number of oily factional powerbrokers, once you've quit your secure job and put your long-term financial security on the line for a chance at perhaps two or at best three years in Parliament, well . . . then you can tell your children you will see them on weekends if they're lucky and when they are sleeping.

Federal MPs rarely complain publicly about their lot. That is because there is a widespread misconception that most of them are self-serving, lazy, over-remunerated and possibly venal. It is rare for a politician to come out publicly in support of a pay rise for his or her fellow MPs before it has actually been granted.

And when he or she does, they are likely to meet a barrage of shock jock-inspired outrage that MPs are yet again seeking to milk more from the public purse while ordinary wage earners are doing it tougher and tougher.

Our political leaders know how politically incendiary it can be when they are seen to deliver themselves pay rises. The Remuneration Tribunal provides advice to the government on what pay and allowances should be given to federal MPs. It is then up to the government to act on that advice. And yes, it is hard to remember when MPs last knocked back a pay rise. While the process is ostensibly very transparent, it nonetheless effectively makes the politicians the arbiters of their own pay and conditions. It always gives rise to the suggestion that MPs' pay should be based upon their individual performance. But how would that work? "Isn't it time the Shadow Minister for External Territories and Surfing YouTube in Question Time got a raise?" you ask. "Shouldn't Christopher Pyne take a haircut for being . . . well, um, Christopher Pyne? And Joe Hockey – shouldn't he get a one-off bonus for highlighting the modern scourge that some say is the leaf blower?"

(A digression, of sorts, and a declaration: I am definitely a leaf blower type of guy. I am drawn to the idea of blowing my garden debris, not to mention small yapping dogs that look like ferrets with perms, into the park next door. I am equally taken with the idea that the best leaf blowers apparently operate as supersonic vacuum cleaners – handy for collecting the dirty socks

and undies, chocolate wrappers and wet towels from the floor of my son's room, known as "the black hole", for sucking up the dead marines after our dinner parties and for ridding the letterbox of election advertising junk mail. But I am under threat of divorce should I acquire either a leaf blower or the high-pressure hose or the chainsaw that I covet. I note that Joe Hockey's wife allows him to keep a leaf blower. And he also owns a power drill that he used at 7 o'clock in the morning precisely a week ago to construct a billy cart for his kids.

Oh really Joe? In that case can you please swing by and construct the 1.7-metre replica mediaeval trebuchet for said son's homework? See you at Bunnings in an hour – the snags are on me. And by the way, Joe, I, too have a power drill; I once used it to open a tin of tomatoes and to separate frozen prawns. It's also pretty handy for cutting kindling.) Anyway, it's not surprising that politicians' pay rises usually win bipartisan support from the major parties.

If you look around both houses of Parliament you will find many wonderfully talented people and more than a few genuine duds – people you look at and think: "Is that really the best we can do?"

A few are motivated solely by a genuinely altruistic desire to make Australia a better place. And a few are motivated solely by the notion of Parliament as a sinecure – a payback for their work behind the scenes or for carrying the can, while staffers, for some politician's mistake. Most, however, regardless of political persuasion, are motivated by a combination of altruism and the desire to make a positive impact on Australian lives – and ambition.

Name a major party member who entered politics without the desire to become prime minister. Or a Greens MP who does not want to be leader. Or for that matter an independent MP who doesn't like attention. The unfortunate fact is that the few lousy, lazy and genuinely untruthful politicians in the system have an unfairly disproportionate impact on the reputations of all. The few Mal Colstons, state and federal, bequeath a permanent odium that undermines public faith in politics and its practitioners – especially their access to entitlements such as travel allowances. Which is why the parties need to be ever vigilant about who they preselect. But how? It all comes down to the peanuts and monkeys argument. Not long ago a highly influential Liberal confided his extreme disappointment at the poor quality of candidates which he maintained that his party continued to select, particularly at the state and territory level. "Too many of them seem to me to be people who haven't done much – or actually can't do much – outside of elected politics. Some are not that bright at all and they have ambition for nobody or nothing but themselves," he lamented.

"I've had these discussions with senior Labor people and they are similarly frustrated. There is a sense that we all need to do better." Special Minister of State Gary Gray has declared his belief that politicians are not paid enough. This, he said, was evidenced by the great disparity between private sector remuneration and the pay of politicians.

He supports overhauling the complex system of MPs' pay and conditions so that base pay rates for backbenchers (currently \$136,640 a year) are lifted in return for cashing out other entitlements. The minister will undoubtedly have his work cut out when it comes to convincing the public of the merits of paying politicians more. But for a government eager to emphasise its as yet unproven taste for tough policy reform, there is perhaps no better way to begin demonstrating such a will than by forcing publicly unpopular measures that will raise the standard of people who enter federal politics. Gray is on the right track. (Paul Daley, *SMH*, November 21, 2010)

Australian Crime:

Facts & figures report shows teens are the most violent Australians

TEENAGERS aged 15 to 19 are Australia's most dangerous people, new figures from the Australian Institute of Criminology showing violent crime is highest among this group.

Teens are responsible for a disturbing number of bashings, robberies, abductions and sexual attacks and 17-year-olds are the worst offenders. The figures were released as part of the annual Australian Crime: Facts & Figures report.

The report showed the rate of assaults in the 15-19 age group was 886 per 100,000 people in 2011, compared to a rate of 85 per 100,000 for offenders aged 55-59. Robberies and extortion in the younger age group were committed at a rate of 115 per 100,000 people. Sexual attacks were most prevalent among 15-year-olds, with 64 offences per 100,000 people. This compared to 18 per 100,000 in the 60-64 age group.

Demographer David Chalke said easier access to alcohol, the prevalence of video games and changing family structures were to blame for high rates of crime among teens. "If you go back 20 years, the availability of alcohol was much less. It was a lot harder for under 18s to get booze," Mr Chalke said. "Now it's a whole lot easier for them to get juiced up and that may be a significant contributor." On families, Mr Chalke said parents working longer hours and having fewer children had resulted in bored teens turning to crime. "Video games have also created a culture where violence is the norm," he said. Criminologist Emmeline Taylor, who will next year head up the a criminology degree at the Australian National University, said teens had been prone to violence for quite some time. "Across Australia and universally, the trend shows there is a sharp incline in criminal behaviour in early adolescence," Dr Taylor said.

Justice Minister Jason Clare said that while the report showed there had been some progress in tackling crime, with a general decrease in crime levels, there was still "a lot more work to do". "The Federal Government recognises the need to support young people who are at risk of falling through the cracks of society and putting them on the right path and this is why we have invested \$40 million into a National Crime Prevention Fund which allows local communities to work together to recognise local problems and develop local solutions," Mr Clare said. The report also shows that knife crime remains prevalent across the country. Almost half of all Australian murder victims in 2011 were killed by a knife and knives also represented 49 per cent of the weapons used in armed robberies. The report also showed fraud committed on credit and charge cards continued the trend of previous years by increasing. Indigenous Australians were also 18 times more likely to be jailed, at a rate of 2276 per 100,000 people, compared to 125 per 100,000 for others. (Lanai Scarr, *News Limited Network*, May 17, 2013)

International

Who Owns This Land? In Greece, Who Knows?

ATHENS — Not long ago Leonidas Hamodrakas, a lawyer in Athens, decided to pay closer attention to his family's land holdings — some fields, a scattering of buildings and a massive stone tower — in Mani, a rural region in southern Greece. But property ownership in Greece is often less than clear cut. So Mr. Hamodrakas put a padlock on his gate and waited to see what would happen. Soon enough, he heard from neighbors. Three of them claimed that they, too, had title to parts of the property. In this age of satellite imagery, digital records and the instantaneous exchange of information, most of Greece's land transaction records are still handwritten in ledgers, logged in by last names. No lot numbers. No clarity on boundaries or zoning. No obvious way to tell whether two people, or 10, have registered ownership of the same property. As Greece tries to claw its way out of an economic crisis of historic proportions, one that has left 60 percent of young people without jobs, many experts cite the lack of a proper land registry as one of the biggest impediments to progress. It scares off foreign investors; makes it hard for the state to privatize its assets, as it has promised to do in exchange for bailout money; and makes it virtually impossible to collect property taxes. Greece has resorted to tagging tax dues on to electricity bills as a way to flush out owners. Of course, that means that empty property and farmland has yet to be taxed. Mr. Hamodrakas is far from resolving the dispute with his neighbors. The courts in Greece are flooded with such cases. "These things take years," he said, "maybe a decade to settle." This state of affairs is particularly galling because Greece has thrown hundreds of millions of dollars at the problem over the past two decades, but has little to show for it. At one point, in the early 1990s, Greece took more than \$100 million from the European Union to build a registry. But after seeing what was accomplished, the European Union demanded its money back. Since then, Greece has tried, and tried again. But still, less than 7 percent of the country has been properly mapped, officials say. Experts say that even the Balkan states, recovering from years of Communism and civil war, are far ahead of Greece when it comes to land registries attached to zoning maps — an approach developed by the Romans and in wide use in much of the developed world since the 1800s. But not in Greece. Here the extent of disputed land is enormous, experts say.

"If you calculated the total deeds that are registered," said Dimitris Kaloudiotis, an engineer who took over as president of the national land registry authority last month, "the country would be twice as big as it is."

Some experts wonder whether there is really the political will to sort things out. An army of lawyers, engineers and architects make their livings through the constant haggling over landownership and what kind of development is possible where. And the lack of zoning maps has proved profitable for some. Researchers, for instance, have found that enormous stretches of protected forest land have been developed in recent years after wildfires cleared the land.

Spyros Skouras, an economist at the Athens University of Economics and Business, who found that the fires increased significantly during election years, says that settling land issues once and for all is difficult politically. "Any government that locks in an outcome will disappoint someone, and no government has wanted to take responsibility." Land disputes are less acute in urban centers, where sidewalks, streets and building walls help clarify boundaries. But in the countryside, deeds reflect another era. Boundaries can be the "three olive trees near the well" or the spot "where you can hear a donkey on the path." "You had guys who had never been to school — who had 100 sheep — and they would throw a rock a certain distance and say: O.K., that's mine," said Mr. Hamodrakas, who in addition to his own problems has handled many landownership cases for clients. "The documents might say 'from the tree to the stream.' It is very hard to know what they are talking about." His own dispute, he said, arises from the language related to a sale that took place long ago. "The papers say that my great-grandfather bought 'the threshing floor and the land around it.' " But did that mean 50 feet around the threshing floor or 5,000?

In general, experts say, Greeks are remarkably at ease with a level of irregularity when it comes to real estate. Stelios Patsoumas, an architect in Athens, says that most houses there run afoul of regulations. The building laws are so tangled, contradictory and outdated that it is virtually impossible to build without violating one regulation or another. Recently, for instance, he said he was asked to build a summer camp for children. The law demanded that the toilet facilities be 50 yards away from the sleeping quarters, a relic from the days of outhouses.

Most people involved in the real estate business say this state of affairs is rooted in the country's tangled history. Greece has weathered a long series of occupations and wars, as well as waves of emigration or migration within the country toward the cities. This means that land was widely abandoned, at least for a time. One of the problems in determining who owns what is that in many cases, use of the land for 20 years entitles you to ownership.

Greece's creditors — the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank — have made it clear that they want the development of a land registry and a zoning map, called a cadastre, sped up. International experts have been visiting Greece in the past year, offering advice. They concluded that the most recent setbacks stemmed from a very poor tendering process, which resulted in expensive and inefficient contracts. Julius Ernst, one of the experts from Austria who participated in a fact-finding mission, said the government had not been clear enough in defining what it wanted done and how. "There has been a lot of money spent, and no one knows where it went," Mr. Ernst said. The goal now is to finish by 2020, though Greek officials call this optimistic. In the end, they said, Greece will probably spend \$1.5 billion straightening things out. The only parts of Greece that have had a land registry and cadastre are the Dodecanese Islands, because they were occupied by the Italians from 1912 to the end of World War II. Land use on the islands, which include Rhodes and Kos, is still guided by Italian law. But there are problems even there. The cadastre maps have never been updated. Lots include beachfront that has long since eroded and paths, once used by donkeys, that have long since disappeared. Nevertheless, residents say they are grateful for the registry, which still includes the gigantic green books the Italians used to log deeds. "You have to understand," said Afroditi Billiri, a lawyer who works on Kos and handles many land issues. "This is cutting edge compared to the rest of Greece." (Suzanne Daley, *New York Times*, May 26, 2013)

China's bullying tactics backfire

China's new leader, Xi Jinping, has revived Chairman Mao's doctrine of the "mass line". The founder of modern China didn't want the masses to have a vote, but he did think that it was vitally important to understand their views.

The "mass line" in Australia today contains an important message to Canberra, and to Beijing. More than a message to Beijing, it's a challenge. It's contained in an opinion poll published on Monday by the Lowy Institute and it says three things very clearly. First, the Australian people fully understand the historic scale and power of China's rise. Three-quarters of people polled said the most important economy to Australia is China's. And the people know that, eventually, this means China will overtake America out of a possible 100, just under Malaysia and just above India. This year it comes in equal 13th with 54, below India and equal with Sri Lanka. But hold on - isn't that just a result of the pernicious influence of the Australian media and Barnaby Joyce-style populism? Perhaps.

Nearly six in 10 - 57 per cent - think the federal government allows too much Chinese investment.

And while most don't think China is likely to be a military threat, a solid proportion of 41 per cent think it will be. And the level of reassurance is falling. A year ago 58 per cent saw China as an unlikely military threat, whereas today that's slipped to 54 per cent. The overall measure of Australians' "warmth" towards China is captured in the Lowy Institute's "thermometer," a gauge measuring how positively people feel towards a range of countries. Last year China was ranked eighth with a warmth of 59 degrees out of a possible 100, just under Malaysia and just above India. This year it comes in equal 13th with 54, below India and equal with Sri Lanka. But hold on - isn't that just a result of the pernicious influence of the Australian media and Barnaby Joyce-style populism? Perhaps.

But there must be something else going on because the people's impression of China has slipped in some other countries over the past year too, as measured by a poll for the BBC World Service released last month.

The annual BBC poll asked people whether China's influence on the world was "mostly positive" or "mostly negative". Of 25 countries ranked in the poll, China fell from fifth place last year to ninth this year. It was China's lowest ranking in the eight years of the poll's life. It not only found that China slipped in the eyes of people in countries including France, Spain, India, Japan, the US and South Africa, it's also fallen in China itself, by 8 percentage points. A minority of the Chinese people themselves consider their country to be a positive influence in the world. Professor Qiao Mu, of Beijing Foreign Studies University, said the BBC poll rating had put China in an "embarrassing" position.

"It seems China is getting rich fast but its influence ranking is dropping dramatically," he told the *South China Morning Post*. "China is drawing more attention globally, for its increasing foreign aid and participation in international affairs, but now it turns out that the values and the political system China holds are not accepted by the world." He misses the obvious point. China's values and political system had not changed from the year before. The new development was Beijing's increasingly muscular stance in territorial disputes with its neighbours, including Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Like the people of other countries, Australians understand China's rising power and are apprehensive of its intentions. That, apparently, leads to the third conclusion from the Lowy poll - Australians are seeking reassurance from their alliance with the US. Overwhelming approval for Australia's US alliance continues, much as it has for 50 years, with 82 per cent in support. This is as close as you get to consensus on any matter. And while that's down by 5 points over the year, support for the most recent intensification of the alliance is up; public approval for the deployment of US Marines to the Northern Territory strengthened by 6 percentage points to 61. The number opposed fell by 9 points to 34 per cent.

The Obama administration's "Asia pivot" is designed to offer reassurance to the Asia-Pacific as anxiety about China rises. Last week the new top US official for East Asia, Danny Russel, said that there's no place for "coercion and bullying" in the region's seas. He rejected China's policy of refusing to deal with the 10 nations of ASEAN collectively in crafting a code of conduct for disputes - Beijing prefers to deal one-on-one to intimidate the smaller states.

Russel described this as "unacceptable". In this he has the support of almost every country in the entire Asia-Pacific, with the possible exception of China's vassal state of Cambodia. Australians are realistic enough to see that they don't need to choose between the current superpower and the future one, or, at least, not now. Asked whether it's possible for Australia to have a good relationship with the US and China at the same time, 87 per cent said yes.

This is a contrast to the near-panic on this question in elite circles. The public attitude is relaxed and demonstrably correct. Because while Australia has embraced the US Marine deployment, it's also signed up to an annual leaders-level meeting with Beijing and hosts more Chinese foreign investment than any other country on Earth.

But if the people are forced to choose, the Lowy poll tells us which way they'd jump. Asked which relationship is more important to Australia overall, 37 per cent nominated the China partnership and 48 per cent the American. So the challenge to you, Comrade Jinping, is clear if you are going to take the "mass line" seriously. The assertiveness of your regime is backfiring. It is not awing the Australian people with China's greatness; it is driving the Australian people closer to your competitor, the US. And if you force the Australian people to choose, you will not like their decision. (Peter Hartcher, *SMH*, June 25, 2013)

Snowden Case Has Cold War Aftertaste

MOSCOW — Looking to secure Russia's help on an array of issues, from Syria to nuclear arms cuts, President Obama at the Group of 8 summit meeting last week talked of his hope for "a constructive cooperative relationship that moves us out of a cold war mind-set." But there are times when the old rivalry is as fierce as ever, when spying and counter-spying are a given. The arrival in Moscow of Edward J. Snowden was such a moment. Ignoring demands by the White House, and even a personal entreaty by Secretary of State John Kerry, to intercept Mr. Snowden and return him to the United States, where he is accused of disclosing classified intelligence, the Russian government denied having any information about him. The denials echoed Monday on state-controlled television and on news agencies close to the Kremlin, even as Russian police surrounded the Aeroflot jet that would presumably ferry Mr. Snowden to Cuba. They were repeated even as WikiLeaks, the anti-secrecy group that is helping Mr. Snowden, said he had special travel papers from Ecuador for safe passage through Russia.

The White House, meanwhile, said that it believed Mr. Snowden was still in Russia, and some experts on U.S.-Russia relations said that belief made sense. "The guy is supposedly carrying four laptops, plus a bunch of thumb drives, supposedly knows all sorts of other things," said Matthew Rojansky, the deputy director of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. "You don't pass up an opportunity like that. You don't just let him pass through the business lounge, on the way to Cuba."

The Russian Federal Security Service, or F.S.B., the post-Soviet successor of the K.G.B., would not say if it had met Mr. Snowden. But Mr. Rojansky said if the agency had avoided Mr. Snowden, that would contradict the gut instincts for great gamesmanship. "Not exclusively because of the cold war, but in part also because of national psyche and culture, these two sides are like Ninja masters who have taken up a new profession," he said. "It's like Mr. Miyagi at the cash register, and when a fly comes by they reach up and grab it."

The ability of the United States and Russia to jockey for intelligence advantage while maintaining their broader relationship was on display just last month when the F.S.B. arrested an American Embassy official here, carrying two wigs, a compass and a large sum of cash, and accused him of working for the Central Intelligence Agency. In that case, both sides knew the playbook well: the official, Ryan C. Fogle, who had diplomatic immunity, was expelled. Mr. Snowden's case was different, partly because he was passing through Russia by choice, as a fugitive, and partly because of the intelligence data he was said to be carrying. While Mr. Obama seemed to go out of his way at the G-8 conference not to publicly chastise President Vladimir V. Putin over human rights disagreements, there was no such restraint on Monday by Mr. Obama's aides in the Snowden intrigue.

"I suppose there is no small irony here, I mean I wonder if Mr. Snowden chose China and Russia as assistants in his flight from justice because they are such powerful bastions of Internet freedom," Mr. Kerry said. "And I wonder while he was in either of those countries if he raised the question of Internet freedom since that seems to be what he champions." And where just last week Mr. Obama was praising Russia for its cooperation with the investigation in the Boston Marathon bombing, Mr. Kerry warned on Monday of unspecified "consequences" for the relationship as a result of the Snowden case. Nonetheless it seemed that more pressing priorities like Syria, and cooperation on the American withdrawal from Afghanistan next year, would far outweigh any tension over Mr. Snowden.

There is also a long history of disagreement over defectors that would suggest American officials have little hope for cooperation. "I know of no instance where a Russian has defected for political reasons to the U.S. and we have returned them," said Pete Earley, the author of a book about Sergei Tretyakov, a senior Russian intelligence officer who defected in 2000, called "Comrade J.: The Untold Secrets of [Russia's](#) Master Spy in America After the End of the Cold War." More recently, the United States has refused Russia's demands to repatriate Viktor Bout, a Russian citizen convicted and imprisoned in the United States for arms trafficking. Examples abound of alleged criminals sought by Russia that other governments have refused to extradite, including Leonid Nevzlin, a former executive of the Yukos oil company who fled to Israel and owned an apartment in New York.

Jasvinder Nakhwal, a partner with the British law firm of Peters & Peters, which has fought numerous extradition requests by Russia, said that both legal and political factors complicate any such situation, but that many Russian requests were blocked. "They have sought the extradition of many individuals and in those particular cases the courts have concluded that the requests have been made for political purposes," Mr. Nakhwal said. In that sense, the Snowden case has provided Russia with an opportunity to accuse the United States government of a politically motivated prosecution, a charge more frequently leveled against the Kremlin by American officials. Mr. Rojansky, of the Carnegie Endowment, said that aiding Mr. Snowden fit with Russia's view of itself as a check on American hegemony. "There's a real continuity in that narrative from cold war to post-cold-war – Russia is an alternative power center, truer to certain ideals," he said. "And this all kind of tracks with Putin's personal mantra: 'I have an independent foreign policy. I am the only world leader who has an independent foreign policy that is not dictated by Washington.'" (David M. Herszenhorn, *The New York Times*, June 24, 2013)

US Journalist: Snowden Greatest Threat to US in Nation's History

American journalist and political commentator Glenn Greenwald has claimed that National Security Agency leaker, Edward Snowden, poses more of a threat to the U.S. than anyone in the country's history.

Greenwald, whose collaborations with Snowden for *The Guardian* exposed U.S. surveillance programs, said that as a result, U.S. officials should hope Snowden stays safe because if not, a mass of harmful information would become public. "Snowden has enough information to cause more damage to the U.S. government in a minute alone than anyone else has ever had in the history of the United States," Greenwald told the Argentinian newspaper *La Nacion*.

"If something were to happen, those documents would be made public. This is your insurance policy," he said.

"The U.S. government should be on your knees every day praying that nothing happens to Snowden, because if something happens, all information will be revealed and that would be their worst nightmare," Greenwald added.

Greenwald's interview comes as Snowden remains in the Moscow airport, where he has remained been for almost three weeks. Bolivia, Nicaragua and Venezuela have offered Snowden asylum, despite intense pressure from the United States. (Rina Tzvi, *IsrealNationalNews.com*, July 14, 2013)

Pakistan ups ante with big military boost

Pakistan has revealed a massive increase in its military budget, the third nuclear power in Asia to unveil a significant increase this year, adding credence to fears of a growing arms race on the continent.

China, Pakistan and India were the only countries to increase their nuclear weapons stockpile last year, as the rest of the world reduced its warhead numbers. In its budget this week, Pakistan announced it would increase defence spending by 15.7 per cent to \$6.3 billion for 2013-14. The army, ostensibly fighting a Taliban-led insurgency in the tribal north-west, but regularly accused of harbouring and supporting terrorists, was allocated the most, a little more than \$3 billion for the coming financial year. Underlining its political influence in Pakistan, the military appears immune from a severe government austerity drive. In

the same week as the army got hundreds of millions more, Pakistan's Prime Minister told his cabinet ministers their budgets would be cut by at least 30 per cent. But globally, the new military money adds to a climate of rising arms spending by the region's three nuclear powers.

Pakistan's announcement follows India's budget, in which military spending rose by 21 per cent to \$42.7 billion, and China's, which increased military spending 10.7 per cent to \$115.7 billion.

India has a lengthy arms shopping list. It is close to signing a deal to buy 126 French Rafale fighter jets for \$12 billion, and is in the market for more than 400 combat helicopters. It is building, with Russia, 250 stealth fighter jets, and its own nuclear-powered submarine. China is building two new classes of missile submarines, new stealth jet fighters and an aircraft carrier-killing ballistic missile as it continues to develop its cyber warfare capabilities. China is the second largest military spender in the world, though well behind the US, whose astronomical defence budget - \$682 billion - still surpasses all of the other top 10 military budgets in the world combined. But the sharp rises in Asia counter an easing of military spending across the world.

Last year worldwide military spending fell for the first time since 1998, by 0.5 per cent to \$1.75 trillion. Asia surpassed Europe for military spending for the first time. US, British and Japanese military budgets all shrank last year. The Australian Defence Force cut its military spending from \$26.6 billion to \$25.5 billion, according to figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. China, India and Pakistan were the only nuclear-armed countries to increase their nuclear stockpiles last year, a SIPRI report said this month. Exact figures are hard to ascertain, but it is believed all three countries added about 10 working warheads to their stockpiles. China now has about 250 warheads, Pakistan between 100 and 120, and India between 90 and 110. Russia and the US reduced their stockpiles. Russia now has about 8500 warheads, the US, 7700. France maintained its warheads at 300, Britain at 225 and Israel at 80.

SIPRI does not regard North Korea and Iran as nuclear powers yet. Their weapons programs are still in their infancy. Rising military spending in Asia was a troubling trend, Britain's secretary of state for defence, Philip Hammond, told the Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore this month, especially given the continuing mistrust between countries now armed with rapidly modernised militaries. "Worryingly, this expansion is taking place within the context of unresolved historic territorial disputes and competition for resources which, without greater mutual understanding and trust, have the potential to escalate and become, at best, a prolonged source of instability and, at worst, a driver of conflict." Australian Defence Minister Stephen Smith said secrecy around military build-ups created suspicion. He urged countries in the region to be open with their defence plans. "Military modernisation, coupled with longstanding maritime and territorial disputes and continuing potential flashpoints, raise the risk of strategic misjudgment or miscalculation. This underlines the need for strategic transparency," he said.

The SIPRI report described the peace that now held in Asia as "fragile", drawing attention to tensions between China, India and Pakistan. All three make claims on the disputed province of Kashmir, with Chinese and Indian troops caught in a tense stand-off during a border dispute earlier this year. (Ben Doherty, *SMH*, June 17, 2013)

World arsenals			Military spending	
Number of warheads			Top 10 countries, 2012	
	2012	2013		
USA	8000	7700	1 United States	\$682b
Russia	10,000	8500	2 China	\$166b
UK	225	225	3 Russia	\$90.7b
France	300	300	4 UK	\$60.8b
China	240	250	5 Japan	\$59.3b
India	80-110	90-110	6 France	\$58.9b
Pakistan	90-110	100-120	7 Saudi Arabia	\$56.7b
Israel	80	80	8 India	\$46.1b
Total	19,000	17,265	9 Germany	\$45.8b
			10 Italy	\$34.0b
			13 Australia	\$26.6b

Israel Is Under Attack – What You Need to Know

As we write, two Iranian-supplied missiles have been launched at Tel Aviv, Israel. Thankfully neither has caused any Israeli casualties. Iran's choice to supply missiles and military expertise to terrorist organizations, like Hamas, stems from its commitment to export terrorism worldwide, a process which began years ago. Evidence of Iranian military involvement exists in Iraq and Afghanistan, in which Iran played a major hand in killing American soldiers.

Imagine how much bolder and aggressive Iran would be if its arsenal included nuclear weapons? Israel's Prime Minister has said that a nuclear-armed Iran would provide a nuclear umbrella for terrorists worldwide. The American people understand these realities. In a post-election Gallup poll, 79% said that stopping Iran from attaining nuclear weapons is a top priority. Yesterday, President Obama said that he will not allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons. At the same time, the President declared that he supported Iran's right to "peaceful" nuclear power. We would like to remind readers that years ago, the Clinton Administration agreed to allow North Korea to develop non-military grade nuclear energy. The US even helped North Korea develop its nuclear energy facilities. To little surprise, North Korea later (unilaterally) upgraded its nuclear energy to Weapon's grade, and crossed a point of no return. Is Iran now likely to do the same? (*SecureAmericaNow.org*, Dec 20, 2012)

Ban: 'Settlements' Undermine Hopes for Peace

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Friday slammed Israel's plans to increase construction in Judea and Samaria, saying they were undermining hopes of ending the Middle East conflict by setting up a Palestinian state. "The secretary

general is deeply concerned by the continuing expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank in violation of international law," said UN spokesman Martin Nesirky, according to the *AFP* news agency.

Ban was "particularly troubled" at Israel moving forward with plans for more than 1,000 new homes in two communities Judea and Samaria, the spokesman said. He was referring to plans to build 538 new homes in Itamar and to legalize 137 existing units there were submitted to regional authorities this week for review, as well plans to build 550 homes in Bruchin. "These are unhelpful decisions that undermine progress towards the two-state solution," Nesirky said, according to *AFP*. "They constitute a deeply worrisome trend at a moment of ongoing efforts to relaunch peace negotiations," he added. "The secretary general calls on Israel to heed the calls of the international community to freeze settlement activity and abide by its commitments under international law and the Road Map."

On Thursday, the United States also sharply criticized Israel's plans to move ahead with 1,000 new homes for Jews in Judea and Samaria, saying they were unhelpful to U.S. efforts to kickstart negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. "We don't accept the legitimacy of continued settlement activity," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters. "We remain hopeful that both sides will look at the important opportunity we have here to build trust and confidence and move back to the negotiating table, and that's what our focus is on." Also on Thursday, Housing Minister Uri Ariel (Bayit Yehudi) announced that 1,000 new housing units for Jews will be built in the Etzion Bloc, in Judea. The State Department was apparently not aware of these plans, however. (Elad Benari, June 14, 2013)

Iran 'Sending 4,000 Soldiers to Syria'

The Independent: Iran is now "fully committed to preserving Assad's regime."

Iran is to reportedly send 4,000 Iranian Revolutionary Guards to Syria to support President Bashar al-Assad in the fight against opposition forces, according to the *The Independent* on Sunday.

In what was described as an Iranian "military decision," the British newspaper said Iran was now "fully committed to preserving Assad's regime," citing unnamed pro-Iranian sources.

The decision, allegedly made before this week's presidential election, was "to send a first contingent of 4,000 Iranian Revolutionary Guards to Syria to support President Bashar al-Assad's forces against the largely Sunni rebellion," the newspaper's highly controversial Robert Fisk reported.

"Iranian sources say they liaise constantly with Moscow [a Syrian ally], and that while Hizbullah's overall withdrawal from Syria is likely to be completed soon – with the maintenance of the militia's 'intelligence' teams inside Syria – Iran's support for Damascus will grow rather than wither," *The Independent* reported.

"They point out that the Taliban recently sent a formal delegation for talks in Tehran and that America will need Iran's help in withdrawing from Afghanistan," the report added. (IsraelNationalNews.com, June 16, 2013)

Iran Could Test Missile in 2015 with Range to Reach US

Iran could conduct tests by 2015 of a ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States, according to a U.S. Department of Defense report published late Thursday evening by Britain's *Daily Mail*.

The 2013 Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat Assessment, which combines information from U.S. intelligence agencies, warns that within 15 years China will have more than a grain warheads could reach the United States. It also confirms a *Washington Times* story that North Korea has an intercontinental ballistic missile that it threatened to test during a recent confrontation with South Korea. North Korea was cited for exporting missiles and technology to Iran and Pakistan, among other countries. (IsraelNationalNews.com, July 12, 2013)

Iran: Missile progress shows sanctions futile

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) - Iran's defense minister claimed Saturday that the country's missile progress shows that U.N. sanctions are ineffective and won't stop Tehran's defense programs. The statement by Gen. Ahmad Vahidi comes during 10 days of war games in Iran's latest show of military might and displays what Tehran claims is growing self-sufficiency in military and other technologies. Vahidi said Iran's missile program is "indigenous" and has no reliance on foreign countries to meet its defense requirements. Iran is under four sets of U.N. sanctions over its refusal to halt uranium enrichment, a technology that can be used to produce nuclear fuel or atomic weapons.

Last week, Iran unveiled underground missile silos for the first time, making Iran's arsenal less vulnerable to any possible attack. Iran's Revolutionary Guard, the country's most powerful military force, said the Islamic Republic has the ability to produce missiles with a greater range than those currently in its arsenal, but doesn't need to do so.

The upgraded version of Iran's Shahab-3 and Sajjil-2 missiles already can travel up to 1,240 miles (2,000 kilometers) - putting Israel, U.S. bases in the Gulf region and parts Europe within reach.

"The war games ... show Iran's great capability in designing, producing and using various kinds of missiles based on domestic knowledge. This showed that the sanctions imposed had no effect on Iran's missile program," Vahidi said in comments posted on sepahnews.com, the Guard's official website. Iran has periodically boasted of what it calls homegrown advances in technological sectors such as its satellite program and other scientific work.

The U.S. and its allies accuse Iran of seeking to develop a nuclear weapon. Iran has denied the charges, saying its nuclear program is aimed at generating electricity and producing isotopes to treat medical patients.

In a separate statement, Iran's telecommunications minister, Reza Taqipour, said Iran is taking technical measures to combat the so-called "Internet in a suitcase," a program reportedly developed by the U.S. to bring online access to dissidents around the world. Taqipour was quoted by state media as saying that the program is part of a "cultural invasion" by Iran's enemies aimed at promoting dissent and undermining Iran's ruling system. He gave no other details. (*The Associated Press/Daily Mail*, November 30, -0001)

Incoming Iranian Leader Calls Israeli Occupation 'a Sore'

TEHRAN — Iranian leaders have often called Israel a “cancerous tumor” that “should be wiped from the pages of time.” But on Friday, the country’s incoming president, Hassan Rouhani, struck a relatively more moderate tone by referring to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, rather than Israel itself, as “a sore.”

Attending a celebration for the annual pro-Palestinian holiday in Iran known as Quds Day, named after the Arabic name for Jerusalem, Mr. Rouhani, said: “In our region, a sore has been sitting on the body of the Islamic world for many years, in the shadow of the occupation of the holy land of Palestine and the dear Quds. This day is in fact a reminder of the fact that Muslim people will not forget their historic right and will continue to stand against aggression and tyranny.” His comments were captured in a video by state television. However, local Iranian media reported the comments differently. They quoted Mr. Rouhani as saying the “Zionist regime is a sore which must be removed.” Later in the day they posted corrections. But Israel had already responded, reporting that Mr. Rouhani had said that Israel “has been a wound on the body of the Islamic world for years and should be removed.”

“Rouhani’s true face has been revealed earlier than expected,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel said in a statement. “Even if they will now rush to deny his remarks, this is what the man thinks and this is the plan of the Iranian regime.” He said the comments underscored that regardless of the change of leadership in Iran, it continued to pursue the goal of achieving “nuclear weapons in order to threaten Israel, the Middle East and the peace and security of the entire world.”

“A country that threatens the destruction of the State of Israel must not be allowed to possess weapons of mass destruction,” the statement concluded. Mr. Rouhani has repeatedly said he wants to reduce the tensions with other countries caused by the departing president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He is, however, a firm supporter of Iran’s Islamic system and in his several books he denounces Israel. (Thomas Erdbrink, *NYTimes*, August 2, 2013)

US Passes Bill to 'Remove Existential Threats' From Israel

US passes bill that would make it policy to take to ensure it is American policy to take all steps to “remove existential threats” to Israel. The U.S. House of Representatives passed an amendment to the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act on Friday, which would make it U.S. policy to take “all necessary steps” to ensure Israel is able to “remove existential threats.” The amendment, initiated by Representative Peter Roskam, a Republican from Illinois, states that, “It is the policy of the United States to take all necessary steps to ensure that Israel possesses and maintains an independent capability to remove existential threats to its security and defend its vital national interests.” “It is the Sense of the Congress that air refueling tankers and advanced bunker-buster munitions should immediately be transferred to Israel to ensure our democratic ally has an independent capability to remove any existential threat posed by the Iranian nuclear program and defend its vital national interests,” it says.

The measure requires the President to regularly submit to Congress a report confirming that the US has taken all steps necessary to ensure that Israel maintains an independent capability to remove existential threats to its security and defend its vital national interests, says Roskam. The Defense Authorization Act triples funding for joint US-Israeli missile defense programs in fiscal year 2014. (Rina Tzvi, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, June 16, 2013)

UN Nominee Samantha Power: Bad For Israel & America

Last month, President Barack Obama nominated Samantha Power for the post of U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, a cabinet-rank post requiring a Senate confirmation hearing which took place this week. Why should we be concerned? Because Power has a documented record of describing both the U.S and Israel as committing war crimes and being human rights-abusers; urging the U.S. to distance itself from Israel and take the Palestinian side; complaining that U.S. support for Israel harms U.S. interests; comparing terrorist Yasser Arafat to former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon; and showing antipathy to those who support Israel. Moreover, in 2008, Power belittled concern at Iran’s nuclear program as having been “refuted” by (the now-discredited) 2007 National Intelligence Estimate. Shockingly, she has also argued that the U.S. should apologize for many of its foreign policy actions, just as Germany apologized for Nazi actions.

Notoriously, in April 2002, Power, advocated in an interview investing billions of dollars in a Palestinians state and providing a “mammoth” military force to shield it from Israel, whom she called guilty of “major human rights-abuses.” She also claimed that doing so would involve “alienating a domestic constituency of tremendous political and financial import” – nastily implying that US support for Israel stems from illicit Jewish influence rather than from long-standing and broad support from an American public that sees it as in the U.S. interest.

Though Power subsequently disowned that interview as incoherent and bizarre, she clearly believes the bit about Israel being a human rights abuser. We know this because, in her 2003 book, “Ethnic Violence and Justice”, she criticized the *New York Times* for headlining a report with the admission by the anti-Israel NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) that there had been no massacre of Palestinians by Israel during the April 2002 armed clash in Jenin. Power’s complaint? The *Times* should have referred in its headline to HRW’s claim that it had seen “signs” of Israeli war crimes. We also know that she continued to hold to her view of illicit American Jewish power because, in 2007, Power gave another interview in which she spoke of “special interests dictating” the definition and pursuit of U.S interests, leading the U.S. to “defer reflexively to Israeli security assessments, and to replicate Israeli tactics.” In 2008, while then-Senator Obama’s foreign policy adviser, she belittled speculation as to Obama’s pro-Israel bona fides, saying “So much of it is about: ‘Is he going to be good for the Jews?’”

Power also wrote in a 2003 article in the *Boston Phoenix* that one of the many things that make U.S. talk of human rights so “hollow” was the perception of pro-Israel bias and the fact that “we don’t contest the settlements or human-rights abuses committed by Israeli soldiers.” In a March 2003 *New Republic* piece, she complained the U.S. “lambastes” terrorist Yasser Arafat but only “ritualistically” takes issue with Ariel Sharon. In a 2004 book review of Noam Chomsky’s “Hegemony or Survival”, Power wrote of the “sins of our allies in the war on terror,” lumping Israel with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, Russia, and Uzbekistan.

Clearly, for Power, U.S. support for Israel is not principled support for a democratic ally fighting real terrorists: it is an objectionable backing for an abusive state. Indeed, in her *New Republic* piece, Power took the U.S. itself to task as being a force for criminal oppression. "We need," she wrote, "a[n] historical reckoning with crimes committed, sponsored, or permitted by the United States." She even made the obnoxious analogy that, just as Germany repented for the crimes of Nazism, the U.S. should adopt "a doctrine of the mea culpa" to "enhance our credibility by showing that American decision-makers do not endorse the sins of their predecessors. When [West German Chancellor] Willie Brandt went down on one knee in the Warsaw ghetto, his gesture was gratifying to World War II survivors, but it was also ennobling and cathartic for Germany. Would such an approach be futile for the United States?"

Power, who has been close to President Obama many years, may well be the single most influential figure in Obama's policy of pre-emptive apology and abasement abroad that has seen him bow and scrape before Saudi and Chinese despots. She is also a likely influence on his policy to pick fights with Israel over Jews living and building homes beyond the 1949 armistice lines, including eastern Jerusalem.

How likely is it, then, that she will work within the scorpion's den of the UN to defend Israel? How likely is it that she will aggressively pursue efforts to prevent Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon? Is it more likely that she will argue aggressively for American interests, or that she will argue for American meekness? Samantha Power's record strongly indicates that she would be a dangerous appointment as U.S. Ambassador to the UN and prove most unlikely to defend effectively the interests of the United States and its allies, including Israel. Little wonder that the *New York Post* columnist Lt.-Col. Ralph Peters describes her as a "left-wing militant" with "zero qualifications to serve as our UN ambassador," while the distinguished British journalist Melanie Phillips counts her among those "extreme and ... dangerous to the well-being of America and the civilized world."

Unless irrefutable new evidence to the contrary emerges during her confirmation hearings, the Senate should vote down her appointment. Morton A. Klein, IsraelNationalNews.com, July 18, 2013)

Russia's missiles will embolden Syria says US

RUSSIA'S shipment of anti-ship missiles to Syria will "embolden" the regime and fuel the country's civil war, the US military's top officer says.

General Martin Dempsey's comments on Friday were the first official confirmation from the US government that Moscow had sent advanced "ship-killer" cruise missiles to President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

"It is at the very least an unfortunate decision that will embolden the regime and prolong the suffering," the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told a news conference when asked about the reported shipment of missiles.

"It's ill-timed and very unfortunate." The New York Times first reported the arms shipment, quoting unnamed US officials, and that the missiles were outfitted with advanced radar. Russia had previously delivered Yakhonts cruise missiles to Syria but those did not have the sophisticated radar, it said. The anti-ship missiles could help Syria counter an attempt by outside powers to carry out air strikes from ships at sea or to impose a no-fly zone. At the same press conference, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the United States would continue to confer with Russia on the Syrian conflict and that both countries shared an interest in preventing a potential regional war. He added that while diplomacy remained Washington's focus, the United States had not ruled out military action as an option.

The United States has long urged Russia to halt arms sales to Syria and has expressed particular concern about the planned delivery of sophisticated S-300 air defence weapons, which officials worry could complicate any international intervention and possibly fall into the hands of Lebanon's Hezbollah militants. Russian warship the Admiral Panteleyev is one of four which docked at Limassol, Cyprus, as part of a four-day visit as Russia maintains a strong presence in the eastern Mediterranean, especially in light of the civil war now engulfing Syria where Moscow has a key naval base. (AP Photo/Pavlos Vrioides)

Asked about the missiles and US contingency plans, Dempsey said the SA-300 was a "more capable" system with a longer-range that would force any air attack to be carried out from a longer, "standoff" distance.

"It pushes the standoff distance a little more, increases risk but not impossible to overcome," the general said.

Apart from the technical capabilities of advanced missiles, such weapons could also cause the regime to overestimate its position and trigger a wider conflict. "What I really worry about is that Assad will decide that since he's got these systems, he's somehow safer and more prone to a miscalculation," Dempsey said.

The general said the US military had no plans to block the delivery of the Russian-made weapons to Syria, saying "we do not have options to prevent the delivery of any military sales to the Syrians." US Secretary of State John Kerry warned last week that such missiles sales would be "destabilising." (AAP/*The Daily Telegraph*, May 18, 2013)

Netanyahu Tells Putin: We'll Destroy S-300s

Israeli PM warns Russia that weapons to Syria will not be allowed to become operational.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu hinted in a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin that if Russia sends S-300 missiles to Syria, Israel will destroy them before they become operational. So reports *Maariv* based on reports from diplomatic sources who were updated regarding the meeting between the two leaders.

Netanyahu's language reportedly was echoed by National Security Advisor Yaakov Amidror, who told EU diplomats that Israel would prevent Russian S-300s delivered to Syria from becoming operational.

Those present at the meeting were reportedly "shocked" by Netanyahu's bold language in speaking to the leader of a world power. On Thursday Syrian President Bashar Assad told the Lebanese television channel *Al-Manar* that if Israel carries out another airstrike in Syria, Syria will strike back.

"There is clear popular pressure to open a new front of resistance in the Golan... The next time Israel attacks, if it attacks, we will have a strategic response. A bombing against a bombing," he said.

Israel is believed to be behind several recent airstrikes on Syrian weapons sites. The strikes were reportedly motivated by concern over the possible transfer to Hizbullah or other anti-Israel terrorists of Syria's chemical weapons. It is believed that Assad might trigger a conflict with Israel in a last ditch attempt to unify Syria behind his rule. (Maayana Miskin, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, May 31, 2013)

U.S. Officials: Israel Behind Recent Syria Airstrike

Unnamed U.S. officials tell CNN that Israel struck Russian-made missiles in Latakia, Syria last Friday.

A series of explosions last week at a critical Syrian port was the result of airstrikes by Israeli warplanes, multiple U.S. officials told CNN on Friday. Regional media widely reported the predawn explosions at Latakia on July 5, but no one had officially claimed responsibility.

Three U.S. officials told CNN the target of the airstrikes were Russian-made Yakhont anti-ship missiles that Israel believes posed a threat to its naval forces. The officials declined to be named because of the sensitive nature of the information. So far, the Israeli government has also declined to comment to CNN.

The Syrian rebels said on Tuesday that "foreign forces" had destroyed advanced Russian anti-ship missiles in Latakia, hinting that Israel may have been behind the attack.

Qassem Saadeddine, a spokesman for the Free Syrian Army's Supreme Military Council, said that the rebels' intelligence network had identified newly supplied Russian Yakhont missiles being stored in the depots that were hit.

"It was not the FSA that targeted this," Saadeddine said. "It is not an attack that was carried out by rebels.

"This attack was either by air raid or long-range missiles fired from boats in the Mediterranean," he added.

Rebels described hearing and seeing huge blasts, the ferocity of which, they said, was beyond the firepower available to them but consistent with that of a modern military like Israel's.

Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon said on Tuesday that Israel does not interfere in the affairs of neighboring countries, but it does act when its red lines are crossed. Some interpreted these remarks as a hint that Israel may have been involved in a strike in Syria. "We've established red lines regarding our interests and we maintain them. Whenever there is an explosion or attack over there, the Middle East blames us anyway," Yaalon said vaguely.

In May, Yaalon said that Israel "will know what to do" if Russia delivers highly advanced anti-aircraft missiles to Syria. These remarks were also viewed by some media outlets as "an apparent allusion to another air strike" on Syria.

In May, Syria claimed that the Israel Air Force (IAF) struck several critical military facilities in Syria, killing dozens of elite troops stationed near the presidential palace. Israel refused to confirm it was behind the attack. The strikes are widely seen as attempts to prevent the Syrian government from transferring weapons to Hizbullah in neighboring Lebanon. (Elad Benari, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, July 13, 2013)

Russia, China, Unhappy about Attacks in Syria

Russia and China voiced concern Monday over the air strikes against Syrian targets, which are attributed to the Israeli Air Force. "We are looking into and analysing all the circumstances surrounding the specially worrisome reports of the May 3 and May 5 Israeli air strikes," the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement quoted by *AFP*,

"A further escalation of the armed conflict severely raises the risk of creating centers of tension in Lebanon as well as in Syria, and also destabilizing the still relatively stable situation in the region of the Israeli-Lebanese border," the statement said.

The Russian foreign ministry also urged the West not to politicize the reported use of chemical weapons in Syria, which officials suggest has now been carried out by both sides. "We insistently urge to stop politicizing this extremely serious question and whipping up an anti-Syrian atmosphere," the ministry statement said. China on Monday also implicitly criticized Israel's air strikes in Syria, as Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu arrived in Shanghai for a visit. "We are opposed to the use of force and believe that the sovereignty of any country should be respected," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a regular press briefing when asked about the raids. She added that China urged all sides to "exercise restraint and refrain from actions that may escalate tensions".

Her comments came as Netanyahu arrived on a five-day trip to China, which will end in Beijing with meetings with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang. It is the first visit by an Israeli prime minister since 2007, and overlaps with a three-day trip by Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas to Beijing, where he met Xi and other officials on Monday. Abbas is due to leave on Tuesday and the two Middle Eastern leaders are not expected to meet while in China, *AFP* said. (Gil Ronen, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, June, 5, 2013)

Russia Holds Biggest War Games in Decades

MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday watched Russia's biggest military maneuvers since Soviet times, involving 160,000 troops and about 5,000 tanks across Siberia and the far eastern region in a massive show of the nation's resurgent military might. Dozens of Russia's Pacific Fleet ships and 130 combat aircraft also took part in the exercise, which began on Friday and continue through this week. Putin watched some of the drills on Sakhalin Island in the Pacific, where thousands of troops were ferried and airlifted from the mainland.

Russia's Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov assured foreign military attaches on Monday that the exercise was part of regular combat training and wasn't directed against any particular nation, though some analysts believe the show of force was aimed at China and Japan. Konstantin Sivkov, a retired officer of the Russian military's General Staff, told the daily *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* that the Sakhalin part of the maneuvers was intended to simulate a response to a hypothetical attack by Japanese and U.S. forces.

Russia and Japan have a dispute over a group of Pacific islands, which Russia calls the Kurils and Japan calls the Northern Territories. The islands off the northeastern tip of Japan's Hokkaido Island were seized by Soviet troops in the closing days of

World War II. They are surrounded by rich fishing grounds and are believed to have offshore [oil](#) and natural gas reserves and other mineral resources. Antonov said that Russia had warned its neighbors about the exercise before it started, and provided particularly detailed information to China in line with an agreement that envisages a mutual exchange of data about military activities along the 4,300-kilometer (2,700-mile) border. The two Cold war-era rivals have forged what they described as a "strategic partnership" after the 1991 Soviet collapse, developing close political, economic and military ties in a shared aspiration to counter U.S. power around the world. Russia has supplied sophisticated weapons to China, and the neighbors have conducted joint military drills, most recently a naval exercise in the Sea of Japan earlier this month. But despite close economic ties and military cooperation, many in Russia have felt increasingly uneasy about the growing might of its giant eastern neighbor.

Some fear that Russia's continuing population decline and a relative weakness of its conventional forces compared to the Chinese People's Liberation Army could one day tempt China to grab some territory.

Russia and China had territorial disputes for centuries. Relations between Communist China and the Soviet Union ruptured in the 1960s, and the two giants fought a brief border conflict in 1969.

Moscow and Beijing signed a new border treaty in 2004, which saw Russia yielding control over several islands in the Amur River. Some in Russia's sparsely populated far east feared that the concessions could tease China's appetite. Alexander Khramchikhin, an independent Moscow-based military analyst, said that the massive exercise held in the areas along the border with China was clearly aimed at Beijing. "It's quite obvious that the land part of the exercise is directed at China, while the sea and island part of it is aimed at Japan," he said.

Khramchikhin, who recently posted an article painting a grim picture of Russia being quickly routed in a surprise Chinese attack, said that the war games were intended to discourage China from harboring expansionist plots. "China may now think that Russia has finally become more aware of what could happen," he said, describing the exercise as a sobering signal. The maneuvers are part of recent efforts to boost the military's mobility and combat readiness after years of post-Soviet decline, but they have far exceeded previous drills in both numbers and territorial scope.

As part of the war games held across several time zones, some army units deployed to areas thousands of kilometers away from their bases. Paratroopers were flown across Russia in long-range transport planes, and some units were ferried to Sakhalin under escort of navy ships and fighter jets.

A decade of post-Soviet economic meltdown has badly crippled Russia's military capability, grounding jets and leaving navy ships rusting in harbors for lack of funds to conduct training. Massive corruption and vicious bullying of young conscripts by older soldiers have eroded morale and encouraged widespread draft-dodging.

The weakness of the once-proud military was shown in two separatist wars in Chechnya when Russian troops suffered heavy losses at the hands of lightly armed rebels. The Russian military won a quick victory in a war with Georgia's small military in August 2008, but the five-day conflict also revealed that the military had trouble quickly deploying its forces to the area. The shortage of precision weapons and modern communications were also apparent.

The Kremlin responded by launching a military reform intended to turn the bloated military into a more modern and agile force. The government also has unveiled an ambitious arms modernization program that envisages spending over 20 trillion rubles (over \$615 billion) on new weapons through 2020. Some military analysts cautioned, however, that the rearmament effort was badly planned and might not be sufficient to reverse the military's decline. "This program is clearly insufficient," Khramchikhin said. (New York Times, July 16, 2013)

Russia Says End of E.U.'s Syrian Embargo Is Threat to Peace Plan

MOSCOW — A senior Russian diplomat said Tuesday that the European Union's decision to lift the arms embargo on Syria endangered the prospects for a peace conference next month backed by Washington and Moscow.

The decision, which may allow new flows of weapons to Syrian rebel forces, "is a reflection of 'double standards' and could inflict direct damage to the prospects for convening the international conference," Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov of Russia said, according to a statement released by the Foreign Ministry.

"You cannot declare the wish to stop the bloodshed, on one hand, and continue to pump armaments into Syria, on the other hand," Mr. Ryabkov told journalists later, according to the Interfax news service.

He rejected the notion that Russian support for President Bashar al-Assad of Syria constitutes interference on behalf of one side in the conflict, saying that Russia is selling arms to "legitimate authorities." He defended a plan to provide the Syrian government with Russian-made S-300 missile batteries, saying the new weapons would be a "stabilizing factor" that could avert a Western-led intervention. "We consider that such steps will restrain some hotheads from the possibility of giving this conflict, or from considering a scenario that would give this conflict, an international character with the participation of external forces," he said. William Hague, Britain's foreign secretary, said no decision to supply weapons had been taken but did not seek to disguise deep differences with Moscow adding that "our policy is decided by us in the United Kingdom not by Russia or anybody else." Britain and France were united in seeking to end the embargo.

"We don't approve of Russia's own supplies to the regime," he told the BBC. "Russia has blocked at the U.N Council every attempt that we have made so far to bring an end to this conflict so far so we have found new ways of working with them but it doesn't mean our policies or views are identical."

Mr. Hague added: "The long-term supply of weapons to the regime from Russia and from other countries has not helped this situation, therefore we do all have to think of the options we can pursue."

Secretary of State John Kerry met with his Russian counterpart on Monday to continue to try to organize peace talks in Geneva next month. There was no immediate American reaction to the Mr. Ryabkov's statement.

In a declaration, the European Union said member states that might wish to send weapons to Syrian rebels "shall assess the export license applications on a case-by-case basis" in line with the organization's rules on exports of military technology and equipment. The ministers did agree to renew all the economic sanctions already in place against the Syrian government.

Reacting to the statement from Moscow, Michael Mann, the spokesman for the European Union's foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, stressed that the decision taken by foreign ministers did not mean that arms would flow immediately to the Syrian opposition.

Mr. Mann said that it was "important to note" that the declaration includes a statement that European Union nations "will not proceed at this stage with the delivery of the equipment." The ministers will review their position before Aug. 1 after consulting the United Nations on the progress of the American-Russian initiative and on the engagement of the Syrian parties, he said. But efforts to ease the arms embargo, led by Britain, exposed deep rifts on Monday over the issue of arming the rebels. Austria, the Czech Republic and Sweden came to the meeting strongly opposing arms shipments. They distrust large parts of the Syrian opposition and said they feared that the weapons would end up in the hands of jihadist groups. They also said funneling arms to the opposition now would undermine the chances of a deal with the Assad government before the planned peace conference in Geneva. There were also fears that Russia, which already sends arms to the Syrian government, would feel freer to send more. France supported Britain in seeking to ease the embargo, but had called for a wider consensus.

The European ministers said it was now up to each member state to decide for itself whether to export weapons to the opposition, because the arms-export issue had been separated from the other sanctions.

In a sign of the tensions, the Austrian foreign minister, Michael Spindelegger, held an impromptu news conference late Monday warning that the end of the embargo risked creating a situation where "everybody is entitled to deliver weapons to the Assad regime or to the opposition."

The failure to agree means that the European Union's existing package of sanctions will lapse after Friday. But ministers emphasized that economic sanctions like asset freezes and travel bans on Syrian officials would continue.

A lapse of all the sanctions would have been a serious embarrassment for the bloc.

"I'm glad at the end of the day we were able to have a sanctions regime for all the other sanctions that were in place," Frans Timmermans, the Dutch foreign minister, said after the meeting. Mr. Timmermans said none of the bloc's member nations, including his own, intended to ship arms to the Syrian rebels immediately. But he warned that lifting the arms embargo could lead Russia to step up its arms shipments to the Assad government. "The only effect you could have — let's be realistic about this — is that it will stimulate the Russians to provide even more arms," he said. "But they've been providing so many arms that I'm sure even more will not make much of a difference."

In a statement made before Russia's reaction, Guy Verhofstadt, a former Belgian prime minister and leader of the grouping of centrist parties in the European Parliament, said Tuesday that Britain and France "should be congratulated on taking the lead." "The longer we leave the Syrian opposition to fend for themselves or depend on support from Qatar and other Arab countries the less influence we can exert over the outcome and the greater the risk they will turn toward extremism," he said. But Oxfam's Head of Arms Control, Anna MacDonald, said she was disappointed with the bloc's decision and the lack of European unity.

"Ministers sent out mixed signals. What was needed was an unequivocal stance that the E.U. will do everything it can to stop the bloodshed and prevent a deadly arms race in Syria, which would have devastating humanitarian consequences," she said. Mr. Kerry and Sergey V. Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, met in Paris on Monday evening to try to lay the groundwork for talks that would bring together representatives of Mr. Assad's government and the Syrian opposition. The Assad government has indicated that it is prepared to attend, but the Syrian opposition is still picking new leaders. Mr. Kerry said additional meetings between American and Russian officials would be held to work out "how this conference can best be prepared for the possibilities of success, not failure."

"Both of us, Russia and the United States, are deeply committed, remain committed to trying to implement the Geneva 1 principles, which require a transitional government by mutual consent that has full executive authority in order to allow the people of Syria to decide the future of Syria," Mr. Kerry said.

The expectation is that the meeting will be held by mid-June. (Ellen Barry, *New York Times*, May 28, 2013)

Russia Sends More Advanced Missiles to Aid Assad in Syria

WASHINGTON — Russia has sent advanced antiship cruise missiles to Syria, a move that illustrates the depth of its support for the Syrian government led by President Bashar al-Assad, American officials said Thursday.

Russia has previously provided a version of the missiles, called Yakhonts, to Syria. But those delivered recently are outfitted with an advanced radar that makes them more effective, according to American officials who are familiar with classified intelligence reports and would only discuss the shipment on the basis of anonymity.

Unlike Scud and other longer-range surface-to-surface missiles that the Assad government has used against opposition forces, the Yakhont antiship missile system provides the Syrian military a formidable weapon to counter any effort by international forces to reinforce Syrian opposition fighters by imposing a naval embargo, establishing a no-fly zone or carrying out limited airstrikes. "It enables the regime to deter foreign forces looking to supply the opposition from the sea, or from undertaking a more active role if a no-fly zone or shipping embargo were to be declared at some point," said Nick Brown, editor in chief of IHS Jane's International Defense Review. "It's a real ship killer." Jeffrey White, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and a former senior American intelligence official, said Syria's strengthened arsenal would "tend to push Western or allied naval activity further off the coast" and was also "a signal of the Russian commitment to the Syrian government." The disclosure of the delivery comes as Russia and the United States are planning to convene an international conference that is aimed at ending the brutal conflict in Syria, which has killed more than 70,000. That conference is expected to be held in early June and to include representatives of the Assad government and the Syrian opposition.

Secretary of State John Kerry has repeatedly said that it is the United States' hope to change Mr. Assad's "calculations" about his ability to hold on to power so that he will allow negotiations for a political solution to the conflict. Mr. Kerry indicated that he had raised the issue of Russian arms deliveries to Syria during his recent visit to Moscow, but declined to provide details.

"I think we've made it crystal clear we would prefer that Russia was not supplying assistance," he said. "That hasn't changed." American officials have been concerned that the flow of Russian and Iranian arms to Syria will buttress Mr. Assad's apparent belief that he can prevail militarily.

"This weapons transfer is obviously disappointing and will set back efforts to promote the political transition that is in the best interests of the Syrian people and the region," Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee, the senior Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, said in a statement on Thursday night. "There is now greater urgency for the U.S. to step up assistance to the moderate opposition forces who can lead Syria after Assad."

Senator Robert Menendez, Democrat of New Jersey and the committee chairman, added in a statement, "Russia is offering cover to a despotic ruler and defending a bankrupt regime."

Syria ordered the coastal defense version of the Yakhont system from Russia in 2007 and received the first batteries in early 2011, according to Jane's. The initial order covered 72 missiles, 36 launcher vehicles, and support equipment, and the systems have been displayed in the country. The batteries are mobile, which makes them more difficult to attack. Each consists of missiles, a three-missile launcher and a command-and-control vehicle. The missiles are about 22 feet long, carry either a high-explosive or armor-piercing warhead, and have a range of about 180 miles, according to Jane's. They can be steered to a target's general location by longer-range radars, but each missile has its own radar to help evade a ship's defenses and home in as it approaches its target. Two senior American officials said that the most recent shipment contained missiles with a more advanced guidance system than earlier shipments.

Russia has longstanding interests in Syria, including a naval base at the Mediterranean port of Tartus.

As the Syria crisis has escalated, Russia has gradually augmented its naval presence in the region. In January, more than two dozen Russian warships sailed to the Black and Mediterranean Seas to take part in what the Defense Ministry said was to be the country's largest naval exercise in decades, testing the ships' ability to deploy outside Russian waters. A month later, after the Black Sea exercises ended, the Russian Defense Ministry news agency said that four large landing vessels were on their way to operations off the coast of Syria.

"Based on the results of the navy exercises in the Black and Mediterranean seas," the ministry said at the time, "the ministry leadership has taken a decision to continue combat duty by Russian warships in the Mediterranean."

Russia's diplomatic support of Syria has also bolstered the Assad government.

At the United Nations, the Russians recently blocked proposals that the Security Council mount a fact-finding trip to Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon to investigate the burgeoning flood of refugees, according to Western diplomats.

Jordan had sought the United Nations visit to make the point that the refugee situation was a threat to stability in the region, but Russia said that the trip was beyond the mandate of the Security Council, diplomats said.

When allegations that the Assad government had used chemical weapons surfaced, Russia also backed the Syrian government's refusal to allow the United Nations to carry out a wide-ranging investigation inside Syria — which Russia's foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, said was an attempt to "politicize the issue" and impose the "Iraqi scenario" on Syria.

Russian officials have repeatedly said that in selling arms to Syria, they are merely fulfilling old contracts. But some American officials worry that the deliveries are intended to limit the United States' options should it choose to intervene to help the rebels. Russia, for example, previously shipped SA-17 surface-to-air missiles to Syria. Israel carried out an airstrike against trucks that were transporting the weapons near Damascus in January. Israel has not officially acknowledged the raid but has said it is prepared to intervene militarily to prevent any "game changing" weapons from being shipped to Hezbollah, the Lebanese militant group.

More recently, Israeli and American officials have urged Russia not to proceed with the sale of advanced S-300 air defense weapons. The Kremlin has yielded to American entreaties not to provide S-300s to Iran. But the denial of that sale, analysts say, has increased the pressure within Russia's military establishment to proceed with the delivery to Syria. (Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt, *New York Times*, May 16, 2013)

New Bridge Over Danube Helps Dissolve Old Enmities

VIDIN, Bulgaria — The European Union hardly basks in popular favor these days. But in this isolated corner of the bloc's poorest periphery, leaders and locals on Friday celebrated a tangible benefit of membership — a \$340 million bridge spanning the Danube that should help strengthen trade and ties between two impoverished members, Romania and Bulgaria.

Bridge workers cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony Friday. Behind them were politicians and a European Union official. Despite much history and present poverty in common, these two Balkan nations had to be prodded into negotiating the construction of the bridge, which began in 2007. Both prime ministers and the European Union's commissioner for regional policy, Johannes Hahn, attended the opening ceremony, where Plamen Oresharski, the head of Bulgaria's new government, joked: "I am sorry that this bridge has such a long history. We heard that the Romans built faster." Romania, population roughly 22 million, and Bulgaria, about 7 million, share a 290-mile border along the Danube that, until Friday, had just one bridge connecting them. Under Communism, neither country was rich, but the collapse of their state-run economies deepened the impoverishment on both sides of the river and hastened depopulation. Vidin, which in bygone Ottoman days was a thriving river port, shipping agricultural produce along the Danube, has suffered the worst depopulation in Bulgaria, losing 16 percent of its residents in 2012 alone. Across the river, the Romanian town of Calafat, population 18,000, has fared little better. Its central pedestrian street, recently fitted with new paving stones, remains sleepy.

Yet it took until 2000 for European officials to coax the two very different Balkan nations into talking about the bridge, largely because they could not agree on a location for it.

Romanians speak a language they prize as descended from Latin roots; Bulgarians are Slavs and in Communist times were derided as being so close to Moscow as to be the virtual 16th republic of the Soviet Union. Each country adheres to its own Orthodox church, and for decades were simply disinterested in each other.

Their shared status in European development post-cold war has gradually brought them closer, as they have discovered more in common. Both joined NATO in 2004, and the European Union in 2007. European Union officials have since criticized both nations, the bloc's poorest members, for corruption and organized crime — some of which originated in the Vidin region in the 1990s, when criminals helped smuggle oil and other goods into neighboring Serbia, which was under United Nations sanctions for its role in the Balkan wars that broke up the former Yugoslavia.

"The illusions we created about what enemies the Romanians are and how different they are have disappeared into dust," Gergo Gergov, the 35-year-old mayor of Vidin, said in an interview in the 15-story, Communist-era municipal building, by far Vidin's tallest. "We have stopped acting like we are locked up alone," Mr. Gergov observed. "We have seen that there are other people around and have started to get to know them, to interact, trade, travel and work with each other." The bridge, he said, is "the biggest event in the modern history of the region."

Vidin — which has a population of 63,000, down from 90,000 during the Communist era — could use the help. Its center, replete with decaying architecture from 19th-century glory days, offers some exotic sights for visitors who disembark every summer day from luxurious Danube cruise ships. A balmy river breeze spreads the sweet smell of linden through the city. But Vidin remains the poorest city and region in Bulgaria, the European Union's poorest member state with average monthly wages of 400 euros, or about \$574.

The common market offered by European Union membership has catalyzed trade and business: trade between Bulgaria and Romania totaled 3.5 billion euros, or about \$5 billion, in 2011, up from 900 million euros in 2005, about \$1.09 million at the time. Ovidiu Cernatescu, 45, a Romanian from Craiova who started a metal construction business in Vidin two years ago and sells 90 percent of his product in Romania, is confident of further expansion and relishes the protection offered by European Union trade rules rather than capriciously applied local justice.

"I've been waiting for the bridge like the coming of Jesus Christ," he said. Ten years ago, Mr. Cernatescu said, Romanians had heard only negative news about Bulgaria as a country where former Communists still held sway. Now, Romanians enjoy it as a cheaper, nice place to visit and trade, he said. Bulgarian businesspeople in the region like Kostas Grivov, who employs 100 workers in two factories processing nuts and dried fruit, are expecting a short-term boom in tourism, shopping and investment. Mr. Grivov, who is also Romania's honorary consul in Vidin, said the bridge would halve his transport costs and greatly increase the speed and reliability of supplies and deliveries. The sole way to Romania had been an unreliable ferry that crosses only when it fills with cars.

In Calafat, the deputy mayor, Dorel Mituletu, sits in a restored late-19th century mansion that might be the envy of his Vidin counterparts. He welcomed the bridge, but said he feared merchants in his town would lose out to Vidin, where prices are 20 to 25 percent lower. He also voiced concern about what he saw as difficult and complex procedures required to secure European Union financing for local projects — processes that have become stricter because of concerns about corruption and mismanagement.

"Romanians are not accustomed to begging," he said. "Despite what the rest of Europe might think of us." (Matthew Brunwasser, *International Herald Tribune*, June 4, 2013)

Health

The body fat that's good for you

Not all body fat is bad for you. Scientists are discovering that the brown variety may have some health benefits. Crack this riddle... What am I? The more of me you have, the less you weigh. The older you get, the quicker I disappear. Men don't have as much of me as women do. Until recently, scientists didn't think adults had any of me at all and believed I could only be found in rodents and newborn babies. The answer is: brown fat, a beneficial part of our bodies that researchers are now unlocking some of the mysteries of. While most body fat - white fat - can be harmful, researchers believe brown fat may hold a key to fighting obesity in the future.

What is brown fat?

Dr Paul Lee, an endocrinologist at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Sydney, who is now continuing his research at the National Institutes of Health in Washington DC, explains: "Think of white fat as an energy storehouse and brown fat as a generator. Brown fat burns fat, rather than storing it. As it burns fat, it turns this energy into heat to keep us warm." Brown fat is present in newborn babies to help them maintain body heat, but scientists believed that it disappeared after infancy.

However, new imaging technology has revealed that people actually retain varying levels of brown fat in adulthood - usually around the neck, shoulders, spine and adrenal glands.

More fat the better

Lee's research has found that people with higher reserves of brown fat are usually slimmer, have a lower body mass index and a healthier blood glucose level. "It looks as if people who are overweight have less brown fat," he says.

"Now we're looking into whether having less brown fat means burning less fat in general and thus putting on weight. Or is it perhaps because a person is overweight and has the layer of fat that provides sufficient insulation that their brown fat atrophies because there's no longer the need for it?" While 50 grams of white fat stores around 300 kilocalories of energy - potentially leading to weight gain - the same amount of brown fat burns 300 kilocalories a day, which is why it has a lot more health benefits.

Activating brown fat

Scientists at Boston's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute have found that exercise may convert some white fat into brown by increasing the level of the hormone irisin. It appears to "activate" the genes that transform one type of fat into another. These researchers are now developing an irisin-based drug to aid weight loss and also improve blood glucose levels, reducing the risk of diabetes. Professor Peter Clifton, head of nutrition at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute in Melbourne, agrees that working out increases brown fat efficiency.

"If you exercise, you can activate brown fat, although we don't yet know how much training you have to do. That said, regular exercise and increasing muscle helps the effectiveness of brown fat," he says.

Kickstart in the cold

Staying cool also seems to stimulate brown fat. In a study at the University of Sherbrooke in Quebec, a group of men were placed in a cool room - chilled but not cold enough to make them shiver - and their metabolic rates increased by 80 per cent as their brown fat kicked into action. "Studies have shown that even exposure to mild cold - 18°C or 19°C - will activate brown fat," Lee adds. "One hypothesis is that obesity is reaching epidemic proportions because we're eating more and are less active, but we are also no longer exposed to the cold as much. Everywhere is so thermally regulated that we're not allowing brown fat to grow as a response to feeling chilly."

The fat of the future

As we learn more about the nature of brown fat, its potential medical benefits become increasingly apparent, too. Lee and his team at the Garvan Institute have shown that brown fat can be cultured from adult stem cells. This raises the possibility that it could eventually be grown outside the body and then transplanted into humans. Alternatively, the production of brown fat may eventually be stimulated with drugs. "We know almost all humans have some brown fat. Some have more, some have less, but it's there," Dr Lee says. "If we can get the conditions right, we can potentially stimulate the growth of it in humans. Or we could harvest the human brown fat cells, grow them in a laboratory, then put them back into the body to increase the amount."

Knowing brown fat exists may help us discover if there are additional measures we can use to help people enjoy a more healthy weight." (Sarah Marinos, *The Telegraph*, May 11, 2013)

A cuppa or three a day could save your life

Drinking three cups of black tea a day can significantly reduce blood pressure, according to Australian researchers. And not only does drinking tea reduce blood pressure, but it also minimizes the inconsistency of readings taken at night. Researchers from the University of Western Australia say that the benefits from tea are largely due to the flavonoids it contains – these antioxidant properties help prevent cardiovascular disease. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for coronary heart disease, stroke, heart failure, peripheral vascular disease and renal failure. It's estimated that more than two million Australians have high blood pressure, and many don't even know it. Blood pressure readings that fluctuate widely during a 24-hour period have also been found to be a risk factor. Lead researcher Professor Jonathan Hodgson says: "There's already mounting evidence that tea is good for your heart health. We've shown for the first time that the consumption of black tea can lower rates of blood-pressure variation at night." (*bodyandsoul.com.au*, May 19, 2013)

Your caffeine habit may be making you fat

Knocking back five cups of coffee a day could lead to weight gain and increase the risk of diabetes. Australian researchers have warned. While previous studies have shown coffee in moderation could help weight loss and actually reduce the risk of type-2 diabetes, these latest findings suggest that too many coffees a day could have the opposite effect due to a substance called chlorogenic acid. The University of WA study found that health effects of coffee are dose-dependent. Three to four cups a day still seems to have health benefits – five cups don't. (*bodyandsoul.com.au*, June 16, 2013)

Drinking coffee linked to weight loss

Coffee not only helps you live longer, it may also help you lose weight, suggests new research. Queensland scientists are studying whether drinking coffee helps people lose weight by suppressing their appetite. "So far, we're seeing a decrease in hunger and an increase in fullness in the caffeinated coffee condition, a trend we're not observing with decaffeinated coffee or caffeine alone," Griffith University PhD candidate Matt Schubert said. This may be important for weight control." Coffee has already been shown to reduce the risk of diabetes, stroke, some cancers, mental illness and overall mortality. The study is continuing. (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, June 25, 2013)

It's quite all white to have these veggies

They may not be as colorful and showy as other vegetables, but white veggies deserve a place on our plate. New research has found the more color-challenged veg such as potatoes and cauliflower still pack a vital nutritional punch and are just as important as greens. The US study, called White Vegetables: A Forgotten Source of Nutrients, found that white and colorless veg including onions, turnips and parsnips are a good source of fibre, vitamin C and potassium and must be part of a balanced diet. (*bodyandsoul.com.au*, June 16, 2013)

Breeding the Nutrition Out of Our Food

WE like the idea that food can be the answer to our ills, that if we eat nutritious foods we won't need medicine or supplements. We have valued this notion for a long, long time. The Greek physician Hippocrates proclaimed nearly 2,500 years ago: "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." Today, medical experts concur. If we heap our plates with fresh fruits and vegetables, they tell us, we will come closer to optimum health. This health directive needs to be revised. If we want to get maximum health benefits from fruits and vegetables, we must choose the right varieties. Studies published within the past 15

years show that much of our produce is relatively low in phytonutrients, which are the compounds with the potential to reduce the risk of four of our modern scourges: [cancer](#), cardiovascular disease, [diabetes](#) and [dementia](#). The loss of these beneficial nutrients did not begin 50 or 100 years ago, as many assume. Unwittingly, we have been stripping phytonutrients from our diet since we stopped foraging for wild plants some 10,000 years ago and became farmers. These insights have been made possible by new technology that has allowed researchers to compare the phytonutrient content of wild plants with the produce in our supermarkets. The results are startling. Wild dandelions, once a springtime treat for Native Americans, have seven times more phytonutrients than spinach, which we consider a “superfood.” A purple potato native to Peru has 28 times more cancer-fighting anthocyanins than common russet potatoes. One species of apple has a staggering 100 times more phytonutrients than the Golden Delicious displayed in our supermarkets.

Were the people who foraged for these wild foods healthier than we are today? They did not live nearly as long as we do, but growing evidence suggests that they were much less likely to die from degenerative diseases, even the minority who lived 70 years and more. The primary cause of death for most adults, according to anthropologists, was injury and infections. Each fruit and vegetable in our stores has a unique history of nutrient loss, I’ve discovered, but there are two common themes. Throughout the ages, our farming ancestors have chosen the least bitter plants to grow in their gardens. It is now known that many of the most beneficial phytonutrients have a bitter, sour or astringent taste. Second, early farmers favored plants that were relatively low in fiber and high in sugar, starch and oil. These energy-dense plants were pleasurable to eat and provided the calories needed to fuel a strenuous lifestyle. The more palatable our fruits and vegetables became, however, the less advantageous they were for our health. The sweet corn that we serve at summer dinners illustrates both of these trends. The wild ancestor of our present-day corn is a grassy plant called teosinte. It is hard to see the family resemblance. Teosinte is a bushy plant with short spikes of grain instead of ears, and each spike has only 5 to 12 kernels. The kernels are encased in shells so dense you’d need a hammer to crack them open. Once you extract the kernels, you wonder why you bothered. The dry tidbit of food is a lot of starch and little sugar. Teosinte has 10 times more protein than the corn we eat today, but it was not soft or sweet enough to tempt our ancestors.

Over several thousand years, teosinte underwent several spontaneous mutations. Nature’s rewriting of the genome freed the kernels of their cases and turned a spike of grain into a cob with kernels of many colors. Our ancestors decided that this transformed corn was tasty enough to plant in their gardens. By the 1400s, corn was central to the diet of people living throughout Mexico and the Americas.

When European colonists first arrived in North America, they came upon what they called “Indian corn.” John Winthrop Jr., governor of the colony of Connecticut in the mid-1600s, observed that American Indians grew “corne with great variety of colours,” citing “red, yellow, blew, olive colour, and some very black and some of intermediate degrees.” A few centuries later, we would learn that black, red and blue corn is rich in anthocyanins. Anthocyanins have the potential to fight cancer, calm inflammation, lower [cholesterol](#) and [blood pressure](#), protect the aging brain, and reduce the risk of [obesity](#), diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

EUROPEAN settlers were content with this colorful corn until the summer of 1779 when they found something more delectable — a yellow variety with sweeter and more tender kernels. This unusual variety came to light that year after George Washington ordered a scorched-earth campaign against Iroquois tribes. While the militia was destroying the food caches of the Iroquois and burning their crops, soldiers came across a field of extra-sweet yellow corn. According to one account, a lieutenant named Richard Bagnal took home some seeds to share with others. Our old-fashioned sweet corn is a direct descendant of these spoils of war. Up until this time, nature had been the primary change agent in remaking corn. Farmers began to play a more active role in the 19th century. In 1836, Noyes Darling, a onetime mayor of New Haven, and a gentleman farmer, was the first to use scientific methods to breed a new variety of corn. His goal was to create a sweet, all-white variety that was “fit for boiling” by mid-July. He succeeded, noting with pride that he had rid sweet corn of “the disadvantage of being yellow.” The disadvantage of being yellow, we now know, had been an advantage to human health. Corn with deep yellow kernels, including the yellow corn available in our grocery stores, has nearly 60 times more [beta-carotene](#) than white corn, valuable because it turns to [Vitamin A](#) in the body, which helps vision and the immune system.

SUPERSWEET corn, which now outsells all other kinds of corn, was born in a cloud of radiation. Beginning in the 1920s, geneticists exposed corn seeds to radiation to learn more about the normal arrangement of plant genes. They mutated the seeds by exposing them to X-rays, toxic compounds, cobalt radiation and then, in the 1940s, to blasts of atomic radiation. All the kernels were stored in a seed bank and made available for research.

In 1959, a geneticist named John Laughnan was studying a handful of mutant kernels and popped a few into his mouth. (The corn was no longer radioactive.) He was startled by their intense sweetness. Lab tests showed that they were up to 10 times sweeter than ordinary sweet corn. A blast of radiation had turned the corn into a sugar factory!

Mr. Laughnan was not a plant breeder, but he realized at once that this mutant corn would revolutionize the sweet corn industry. He became an entrepreneur overnight and spent years developing commercial varieties of supersweet corn. His first hybrids began to be sold in 1961. This appears to be the first genetically modified food to enter the United States food supply, an event that has received scant attention.

Within one generation, the new extra sugary varieties eclipsed old-fashioned sweet corn in the marketplace. Build a sweeter fruit or vegetable — by any means — and we will come. Today, most of the fresh corn in our supermarkets is extra-sweet, and all of it can be traced back to the radiation experiments. The kernels are either white, pale yellow, or a combination of the two. The sweetest varieties approach 40 percent sugar, bringing new meaning to the words “candy corn.” Only a handful of farmers in the United States specialize in multicolored Indian corn, and it is generally sold for seasonal decorations, not food.

We’ve reduced the nutrients and increased the sugar and starch content of hundreds of other fruits and vegetables. How can we begin to recoup the losses? Here are some suggestions to get you started. Select corn with deep yellow kernels. To recapture the lost anthocyanins and beta-carotene, cook with blue, red or purple cornmeal, which is available in some supermarkets and on the Internet. Make a stack of blue cornmeal pancakes for Sunday breakfast and top with maple syrup. In the lettuce section, look

for arugula. Arugula, also called salad rocket, is very similar to its wild ancestor. Some varieties were domesticated as recently as the 1970s, thousands of years after most fruits and vegetables had come under our sway. The greens are rich in cancer-fighting compounds called glucosinolates and higher in antioxidant activity than many green lettuces.

Scallions, or green onions, are jewels of nutrition hiding in plain sight. They resemble wild onions and are just as good for you. Remarkably, they have more than five times more phytonutrients than many common onions do. The green portions of scallions are more nutritious than the white bulbs, so use the entire plant. Herbs are wild plants incognito. We've long valued them for their intense flavors and aroma, which is why they've not been given a flavor makeover. Because we've left them well enough alone, their phytonutrient content has remained intact.

Experiment with using large quantities of mild-tasting fresh herbs. Add one cup of mixed chopped Italian parsley and basil to a pound of ground grass-fed beef or poultry to make "herb-burgers." Herbs bring back missing phytonutrients and a touch of wild flavor as well. The United States Department of Agriculture exerts far more effort developing disease-resistant fruits and vegetables than creating new varieties to enhance the disease resistance of consumers. In fact, I've interviewed [U.S.D.A.](#) plant breeders who have spent a decade or more developing a new variety of pear or carrot without once measuring its nutritional content. We can't increase the health benefits of our produce if we don't know which nutrients it contains. Ultimately, we need more than an admonition to eat a greater quantity of fruits and vegetables: we need more fruits and vegetables that have the nutrients we require for optimum health. (Jo Robinson, *New York Times*, May 25, 2013)

Botox fad is poison to youth say doctors

YOUNGSTERS may like to act older than their age, but that's no excuse for the boom in under-30s using Botox and fillers, doctors have warned.

Almost a third of Australians using anti-ageing treatments are aged between 18 and 29, new figures show, with doctors reporting 17-year-olds requesting injections and mothers taking their 15-year-old daughters for lip fillers.

Now doctors are urging young people to hold off from such treatments until they turn 30.

The latest survey by the Cosmetic Physicians Society of Australasia found 28 per cent of those having cosmetic anti-ageing treatments, often to prevent wrinkles later on, were 29 or younger, up from 9.7 per cent the year before.

Starting treatment early could delay signs of ageing, but lifestyle factors were more effective, said the society's spokeswoman Dr Susan Austin. "I recommend that patients should consider these medical procedures after the age of 30, when many patients start to see changes in their skin like fine lines, folds and pigmentation," she said.

"The best thing is giving up the smoking, losing the weight, getting on a healthy diet, lots of water, trying to wear sunscreen and avoid the sun." Doctors would treat twentysomethings with a "viable" problem, such as a hereditary furrow or thin lips, she added. Australians also tended to seek anti-ageing treatments earlier than the Europeans and Americans. "We're prone to looking much older than our international counterparts, I estimate about 15 years older," Dr Austin said. AMA federal president Dr Steve Hambleton said there was no reason for cosmetic treatments before 30 unless there was a serious issue, such as bad acne or a serious birthmark. "There are lots of risks and some of them aren't physical," he said. "The potential is to ignore and not to take into consideration distorted body issues," he said.

"Just because you can do something, doesn't mean you should." Since she was 19, 21-year-old Ashleigh Mitchell, from St Ives, has had her lips injected with filler three times, and has had four rounds of Botox injections to her forehead, frown line and eyes. "I had a bit of a frown, so I wanted to stop it from becoming worse," she said. "And with the lips, it's to enhance them and make them look fuller. People haven't noticed the Botox. They will say, 'You look fresher'. The fillers are a bit more noticeable." (Jordan Baker, *The Sunday Telegraph*, June 02, 2013)

Nuclear leak not harmful

VIENNA: Radiation leaked after Japan's Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 is unlikely to cause any ill health effects in the future, a UN scientific committee says.

"Radiation exposure following the nuclear accident at Fukushima-Daiichi ... did not cause any immediate health effects," the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation said. "It is unlikely to be able to attribute any health effects in the future among the public." (*The Sunday Telegraph*, June 2, 2013)

Michael Douglas: oral sex caused my cancer

Michael Douglas – the star of *Basic Instinct* and *Fatal Attraction* – has revealed that his throat cancer was apparently caused by performing oral sex. In a surprisingly frank interview with the *Guardian*, the actor, now winning plaudits in the Liberace biopic *Behind the Candelabra*, explained the background to a condition that was thought to be nearly fatal when diagnosed three years ago. Asked whether he now regretted his years of smoking and drinking, usually thought to be the cause of the disease, Douglas replied: "No. Because without wanting to get too specific, this particular cancer is caused by HPV [human papillomavirus], which actually comes about from cunnilingus." Douglas, the husband of Catherine Zeta Jones, continued: "I did worry if the stress caused by my son's incarceration didn't help trigger it. But yeah, it's a sexually transmitted disease that causes cancer. And if you have it, cunnilingus is also the best cure for it." The actor, now 68, was diagnosed with cancer in August 2010, following many months of oral discomfort. But a series of specialists missed the tumour and instead prescribed antibiotics. Douglas then went to see a friend's doctor in Montreal who looked inside his mouth using a tongue depressor.

"I will always remember the look on his face," Douglas has previously said. "He said: 'We need a biopsy.' There was a walnut-size tumour at the base of my tongue that no other doctor had seen."

Shortly afterwards he was diagnosed with stage four cancer, which is often terminal, and embarked on an intensive eight-week course of chemotherapy and radiation. He refused to use a feeding tube, despite his palate being burnt on account of the treatment, and so lost 20kg (45lb) on a liquids-only diet. "That's a rough ride. That can really take it out of you," he told the

Guardian. "Plus the amount of chemo I was getting, it zaps all the good stuff too. It made me very weak." The treatment worked and Douglas is now more than two years clear of cancer. He has check-ups every six months, he said, "and with this kind of cancer, 95% of the time it doesn't come back".

The cause of Douglas's cancer had long been assumed to be related to his tobacco habit, coupled with enthusiastic boozing. In 1992, he was hospitalised for an addiction which some at the time claimed to be sex. Douglas himself denied this and said he was in rehab for alcohol abuse. He has also spoken of recreational drug use.

HPV, the sexually transmitted virus best known as a cause of cervical and anal cancer and genital warts, is thought to be responsible for an increasing proportion of oral cancers. Some suggest that changes in sexual behaviour – a rise in oral sex in particular – are responsible. Such changes might be cultural, but could also be linked to fears about the safety of penetrative sex in the wake of the Aids epidemic. Mahesh Kumar, a consultant head and neck surgeon in London, confirmed that the last decade has seen a dramatic rise in this form of cancer, particularly among younger sufferers. Recent studies of 1,316 patients with oral cancer found that 57% of them were HPV-16 positive.

"It has been established beyond reasonable doubt that the HPV type 16 is the causative agent in oropharyngeal cancer," said Kumar, who also testified to increased recovery rates among this kind of cancer sufferer. This would help explain why Douglas was given an 80% chance of survival, despite the advanced stage of his illness.

But Kumar expressed scepticism that Douglas's cancer was caused solely by HPV, and surprise at Douglas's assertion that cunnilingus could also help cure the condition. "Maybe he thinks that more exposure to the virus will boost his immune system. But medically, that just doesn't make sense." Ann Robinson, a GP, expressed interest in how confirmation of this association would affect the rollout of the HPV vaccine, which is currently restricted in the UK. "My main priority with diagnosing a patient with oral cancer is to get them referred, as early intervention can be so crucial. Asking for a detailed sexual history would be inappropriate at that stage."

Douglas has two children, aged 10 and 12, with his second wife, Zeta Jones, as well as an older son, Cameron, from a previous marriage. In 2010, Cameron was sentenced to five years in prison for drugs possession and dealing, and a year later had his sentence extended until 2018 after he pleaded guilty to possessing drugs in prison.

HPV: the facts

- There are more than 100 variants of HPV (human papillomavirus). They appear in different parts of the body and manifest themselves in different ways – some cause warts, but most are symptomless.

- Some are spread by skin-to-skin contact, while others are typically spread during sex. When HPV is found in the mouth, it probably got there as a result of oral sex.

- HPV is common – if you're a sexually active adult, you've probably had it. By the age of 25, 90% of sexually active people will have been exposed to some form of genital HPV.

- Around 15 types of HPV are linked to increased cancer risk, but it can't be explicitly said to cause any particular cancers. It's a long-term risk factor: over years and decades the risk is increased, rather than overnight.

- It is calculated that between 25% and 35% of oral cancers are HPV-related – meaning that it seems to be involved in 1,500-2,000 diagnoses a year.

- Overall, HPV-related oral cancers are most common in heterosexual men in their 40s and 50s.

- Teenage girls in the UK and elsewhere are now vaccinated against HPV, which should in time both protect them from cervical cancers and – it's believed – future partners from HPV-related oral cancers. (Catherine Shoard, *The Guardian*, June 3, 2013)

Why Music Makes Our Brain Sing

MUSIC is not tangible. You can't eat it, drink it or mate with it. It doesn't protect against the rain, wind or cold. It doesn't vanquish predators or mend broken bones. And yet humans have always prized music – or well beyond prized, loved it. In the modern age we spend great sums of money to attend concerts, download music files, play instruments and listen to our favorite artists whether we're in a subway or salon. But even in Paleolithic times, people invested significant time and effort to create music, as the [discovery of flutes](#) carved from animal bones would suggest. So why does this thingless "thing" – at its core, a mere sequence of sounds – hold such potentially enormous intrinsic value? The quick and easy explanation is that music brings a unique pleasure to humans. Of course, that still leaves the question of why. But for that, neuroscience is starting to provide some answers. More than a decade ago, our research team used brain imaging to [show](#) that music that people described as highly emotional engaged the reward system deep in their brains – activating subcortical nuclei known to be important in reward, motivation and emotion. [Subsequently](#) we found that listening to what might be called "peak emotional moments" in music – that moment when you feel a "chill" of pleasure to a musical passage – causes the release of the neurotransmitter [dopamine](#), an essential signaling molecule in the brain.

When pleasurable music is heard, dopamine is released in the striatum – an ancient part of the brain found in other vertebrates as well – which is known to respond to naturally rewarding stimuli like food and sex and which is artificially targeted by drugs like cocaine and amphetamine. But what may be most interesting here is *when* this neurotransmitter is released: not only when the music rises to a peak emotional moment, but also several seconds before, during what we might call the anticipation phase. The idea that reward is partly related to anticipation (or the prediction of a desired outcome) has a long history in neuroscience. Making good predictions about the outcome of one's actions would seem to be essential in the context of survival, after all. And dopamine neurons, both in humans and other animals, play a role in recording which of our predictions turn out to be correct. To dig deeper into how music engages the brain's reward system, we designed a [study](#) to mimic online music purchasing. Our goal was to determine what goes on in the brain when someone hears a new piece of music and decides he likes it enough to buy it.

We used music-recommendation programs to customize the selections to our listeners' preferences, which turned out to be indie and electronic music, matching Montreal's hip music scene. And we found that neural activity within the striatum — the reward-related structure — was directly proportional to the amount of money people were willing to spend. But more interesting still was the cross talk between this structure and the auditory cortex, which also increased for songs that were ultimately purchased compared with those that were not.

Why the auditory cortex? Some 50 years ago, Wilder Penfield, the famed neurosurgeon and the [founder](#) of the Montreal Neurological Institute, reported that when neurosurgical patients received electrical stimulation to the auditory cortex while they were awake, they would sometimes report hearing music. Dr. Penfield's observations, along with those of many others, suggest that musical information is likely to be represented in these brain regions.

The auditory cortex is also active when we imagine a tune: think of the first four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony — your cortex is abuzz! This ability allows us not only to experience music even when it's physically absent, but also to invent new compositions and to reimagine how a piece might sound with a different tempo or instrumentation. We also know that these areas of the brain encode the abstract relationships between sounds — for instance, the particular sound pattern that makes a major chord major, regardless of the key or instrument. Other studies show distinctive neural responses from similar regions when there is an unexpected break in a repetitive pattern of sounds, or in a chord progression. This is akin to what happens if you hear someone play a wrong note — easily noticeable even in an unfamiliar piece of music.

These cortical circuits allow us to make predictions about coming events on the basis of past events. They are thought to accumulate musical information over our lifetime, creating templates of the statistical regularities that are present in the music of our culture and enabling us to understand the music we hear in relation to our stored mental representations of the music we've heard. So each act of listening to music may be thought of as both recapitulating the past and predicting the future. When we listen to music, these brain networks actively create expectations based on our stored knowledge. Composers and performers intuitively understand this: they manipulate these prediction mechanisms to give us what we want — or to surprise us, perhaps even with something better.

In the cross talk between our cortical systems, which analyze patterns and yield expectations, and our ancient reward and motivational systems, may lie the answer to the question: does a particular piece of music move us?

When that answer is yes, there is little — in those moments of listening, at least — that we value more.

Robert J. Zatorre and Valorie N. Salimpor, *International Herald Tribune*, June 7, 2013

Could snot-eating be good for you?

A Canadian academic believes that eating the contents of your nose could have health benefits — and he's conducting a study to see if he's right.

Professor Scott Napper, from the University of Saskatchewan, is now seeking volunteers to help him test his theory. He believes the mucus in our noses, which traps germs before they get into our body, could help build up the body's immune system by exposing it to small and harmless amounts of germs. Professor Napper adds that snot has a sugary taste and that may be a signal to the body to consume it and derive information for the immune system. (*bodyandsoul.com.au*, May 19, 2013)

Are you a victim of the hunger gene?

If you always have room for dessert - and maybe even a second helping - you are about to be handed the perfect excuse. It may be in your genes. Scientists say that millions of people carry a rogue stretch of DNA that stops them feeling full and leaves them craving sugary and fatty foods. The FTO gene, carried by more than half of the population, was discovered several years ago. But while researchers knew it made people fat, they didn't know how it did so.

Now they have learned that it keeps people feeling hungry, it could lead to new ways to tackle the obesity crisis. The 16 per cent of the population that carries two copies of the rogue DNA are 70 per cent more likely to become obese than those without the gene. They eat up to 200 extra calories a day and are almost half a stone heavier than their average counterparts. And for those with the 'hunger gene' dieting is doomed to failure. Even those who have inherited just one flawed FTO gene - 49 per cent of the population - are 30 per cent more likely to be obese.

The British-led research team asked young men with and without the genetic flaw to rate their hunger before and after a meal. Volunteers' blood samples were then tested for ghrelin, a hormone that triggers feelings of hunger. Levels of ghrelin are usually high before we eat, and fall afterwards. But in the men with the 'hunger gene', levels remained relatively high after eating. They also felt hungrier than the others. Next, the volunteers were shown pictures of various foods after they had eaten and asked how appealing they seemed. And despite just having had a meal, those with the gene still found cakes, pastries, chips and burgers highly tempting. The scientists then used MRI scanners to peer into the volunteers' brains. Those with the 'hunger gene' lit up more at the thought of fatty and sugary foods, the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* reports. Study leader Dr Rachel Batterham, of University College London, said that some of us were simply "biologically programmed to eat more.

"Not only do these people have higher ghrelin levels and therefore feel hungrier, their brains respond differently to ghrelin and to pictures of food. It's a double hit" she said. The work, which was funded by the medical research charity the Rosetrees Trust and the Medical Research Council, could speed research into new obesity treatments.

"We know that ghrelin, and therefore hunger, can be reduced by exercise like running or cycling or by eating a high-protein diet" said Dr Batterham. There are also obesity drugs available. Professor Steve Bloom, an obesity expert from Imperial College London, agreed the research would spur on the search for new treatments. It could also help in targeting any drugs to those who would benefit the most, he said. (Fiona Macrae, *Daily Mail*, July 16, 2013)

Travel

52 travel tips you really should know

THERE'S an art to travelling well. Some little secrets you learn on the way, like making sure you find a map at the airport before you leave and always throwing spare plastic bags into your suitcase for dirty clothes. But we decided to save you time. News.com.au asked our reporters for their best travel tips. Here's our ultimate travel advice list. Have we missed any? Let us know.

1) Wash your clothes in the sink / shower. Use the hotel soap. Or take a little traveller sized bottle of laundry detergent with you. It's much easier than finding a Laundromat in a foreign country. And there are only so many times that you can wear the same pair of undies.

2) Learn how to use a needle and thread. You've only got space for a few items of clothing. Sewing a broken button back on will save you a lot of hassle.

3) Carry baby wipes / facewipes. This can be used to feel clean when there are no showers. Yes, sometimes there are NO showers.

4) Learn how to say "no thank you". Most travel advice columns will tell you to learn how to say "hello", "yes please", "thank you" and "do you speak English?". But in some countries you really want to be able to say "no thank you, please leave me alone". Think about the crowded market places in Asia. Knowing how to say "no thank you" in their language is going to give you a lot more peace.

5) Grocery stores are a traveller's best resource. Cheap food, local flavours. Find the nearest one to your hotel and you will save yourself a heap of cash. Have a picnic lunch every day.

6) Keep an emergency stash of money. If you lose your wallet you will still need to eat. An empty Chapstick is a fantastic secret hiding spot.

7) Learn how to drive a manual car. Stuck at an airport after your flight has been cancelled? You could drive. You will be smacking your head on the desk if they only have manual cars.

8) Roll your clothes when packing. No creases and more clothes fit into your suitcase.

9) Always keep a stash of spare plastic bags for dirty clothes / shoes. Smelly socks will make your clean clothes stink. Always.

10) Learn how to swim. You never know when you might need to on the spur of the moment.

11) Learn how to pack light. You do not need to take 20kg for a week of travel. You CAN wear trousers two days in a row or more. The less you have to carry, the happier you will be travelling. And if the French Metro goes on strike on the day you need to get to the airport - you will thank us.

12) Know how much it should cost in a taxi. Carry a card with the hotel address and a map. Ask for taxi drivers to use the meter. Make sure they are legitimate taxi drivers.

13) Always carry a hard copy map of the city you're going to. Save your phone charge for when you really need it.

14) Make sure your bank cards work. There is nothing more annoying on holidays than spending hours on the phone to the bank back home.

15) Carry tissues that can double up as toilet paper. Plus carry a hand sanitiser.

16) Pack sandals or thongs for use in showers. Showers can be gross. You don't want your feet to touch the floor.

17) Learn how to change a tyre. Murphy's law says if you don't know and you head off on a road trip, you're bound to get a flat.

18) Be prepared to sleep anywhere. Ear plugs and eye patches will help block out the light.

19) Learn how to take a decent photo. Don't come home with a bunch of Instagram selfies. Memories fade and you'll want something to remember the scenery by.

20) Pack smart. Put necklaces in straws so they don't get jumbled. Use a button to keep earrings together.

21) Learn basic first aid. This is just a great life skill, if nothing else.

22) Get folders for travel documents and itineraries. Keep them organised so you don't have to mess about digging through pockets in your bag at the airport check-in.

23) Use public transport. It's fast. It's easy, it's cheaper and it will give you a better travel experience. Get a map, learn the different ticket types and if you are heading to London – organise an Oyster Card in advance.

24) Use little bottles for everything. It takes up less room. If you use plain bottles make sure you label them with a pen that won't wash or rub off. Mistakes can and do happen. Moisturising your hair is not a good look.

25) Buy and wear good walking shoes. Blisters are not fun and high heels don't work on Europe's cobblestone pathways.

26) Ask the locals for advice, tips. The best beach probably isn't the most popular one. The locals can help you find those secret spots you will rave about.

27) Eat where the locals eat. Just like number 26 - the same goes with restaurants. Ask the locals where they eat. Go there instead.

28) Peg clothes to the outside of your backpack as you walk around in the sun to dry them after washing. Cheap and easy!

29) Know where the embassy is. Seriously. Find it on your map. Don't think just because you are in a "safe" country you won't need it. All it takes is a quick Google search, write down the address and put it in a safe place.

30) Register your details with DFAT. OK, this one is obvious but surprisingly so many of us don't actually do it. In cases like Boston or London, DFAT will be the place your family will turn to. Make sure they know where you are.

31) Be aware of the local laws. Don't get drunk on the streets of Dubai or expect to chew and spit gum in Singapore. You're leaving Australia - don't expect our law system to follow you around the world.

32) Get your vaccinations if you need them. Yellow fever is not fun. You will kick yourself if you could have prevented it and you didn't.

33) Scan your passport and travel documents. Give copies to family/friends. If you lose your passport or travel documents, this backup will save you a lot of heartache. It will also help your family to find you in the event of a disaster.

34) Learn a few phrases of the local language. Speak to the locals. Experience their culture. Don't just wander through it.

35) Know the scams of each destination. 'Thai driver want to show you his best restaurant?' It's probably his mate's. Get on the internet and work out the scams so you don't become a sucker. Then refer to number 4.

36) Learn the art of haggling. Haggling saves you money. Be bold. That extra \$4 will buy you a coffee.

37) Learn the basic geography of the country you are visiting. There's nothing worse than a traveler who has no idea where they are travelling.

38) Learn how to use a compass. Sounds extreme but it could help in a crisis.

39) Learn how to use chopsticks. Don't look like a tourist asking for a fork. Chopsticks are a must.

40) Get travel insurance. It's obvious, but probably one of the most important items on this list. The French always go on strike meaning your flight could easily get cancelled and accidents do happen, particularly if you want to ride a scooter in Bali. Get travel insurance.

41) Allow relaxation time to get over jet lag. You don't want to be on the go for six weeks straight. It should be a holiday. You should relax at some point.

42) Keep a change of clothes and basic toiletries in your carry-on. If your luggage gets lost you will be very glad.

43) Travelling via Singapore? Pack your swimmers in your carry-on and take a break in the outdoor rooftop pool at the airport while in transit. You will feel 100 per cent better getting on the next flight.

44) Research the airports you are travelling through so you can a) find the fastest way through and b) use the facilities. Don't just sit at the boarding gate.

45) Take a jumper on the plane. It is cold. It has air conditioning.

46) Take thick socks for the plane. Cold feet will stop you sleeping.

47) Take Imodium and panadol/nurofen. The cuisine of other countries can be harsh on the tummy.

48) Find out if the country you are going to sells tampons. Some countries don't. Or they are really hard to find. Even places you wouldn't think of - like Athens.

49) Check if the drinking water is safe. That includes brushing your teeth, ice in cocktails and drinking water in the shower.

50) Be aware of altitude sickness. Give yourself time to adjust between altitudes, drink a lot more when you are high up.

51) Know the local road rules. Even in New Zealand the rules are different.

52) Be respectful. Pay attention to how local women dress to work out how you should. That's our list. Have we missed any? Share your ultimate travel tips below. (Alison Godfrey, *news.com.au*, May 02, 2013)

The most awesome travel tricks ever

IT can be a challenge trying to fit everything you need into your suitcase: jewellery can get tangled up and large tubs of moisturiser can take up valuable space. So what can you do to make packing for your next trip that bit easier? [These top 14 travel tips were recently posted onto Buzzfeed.](#) They're worth a try, and will make packing more fun!

1. Store necklaces in a straw to keep them from getting tangled in your suitcase
2. Use an empty tube of chapstick as a secret hiding spot for cash and other valuables
3. A hard plastic soap case is the perfect size to protect a camera stashed in a carry-on bag
4. Use straws to bring small amounts of liquid with you
5. Safely pack your razor with a binder clip
6. Use a Tic Tac case to store bobby pins
7. Use a button to keep earrings together while travelling
8. Roll silk scarves around empty paper towel holder for no wrinkles
9. Use a medicine organizer to store small earrings or rings
10. Attach your keys and money to a binder clip and attach it to your belt for on the go shopping or for a night out on the town
11. Use a pot holder to pack a hair straightener
12. Sticking a dryer sheet among clothes in a suitcase will keep your clothes smelling fresh
13. Hole punch & O-ring to keep track of business cards
14. Lip balm serves double duty as cuticle moisturizer. (*news.com.au*, November 08, 2012)

Religion

In the Bible Belt, Offering Atheists a Spiritual Home

BATON ROUGE, La. — It would have been easy to mistake what was happening in a hotel ballroom here for a religious service. All the things that might be associated with one were present Sunday: 80 people drawn by a common conviction. Exhortations to service. Singing and light swaying. An impassioned sermon.

There was just no mention of God.

Billed as Louisiana's first atheist service and titled "Joie de Vivre: To Delight in Being Alive," it was presided over by Jerry DeWitt, a small, charismatic man dressed all in black with slick, shiny hair. "Oh, it's going to be so hard to not say, 'Can I get an

amen?" he said with a smile, warning people that this was going to be more like church than they might expect. "I want you to feel comfortable singing. And I want you to feel comfortable clapping your hands. I'm going to ask you to silence your cellphones, but I'm not going to ask you to turn them off. Because I want you to post." As Mr. DeWitt paced back and forth, speaking with a thick Southern accent, his breathy yet powerful voice occasionally cracked with emotion. The term may be a contradiction, but he is impossible to describe as anything but an atheist preacher. Mr. DeWitt acts so much like a clergyman because he was one.

He was raised Pentecostal in DeRidder, La., a small town near the Texas border. In 2011, after 25 years as a preacher, he realized he had lost all connection to the religious point of view that had defined most of his life. He left the church and found himself ostracized in his hometown and from his family. Since then, Mr. DeWitt, 43, has become a prominent advocate of atheism, giving lectures around the region and providing an emotional counterpoint to more academic atheist exponents like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens.

With Sunday's service — marking the start of Community Mission Chapel in Lake Charles, which Mr. DeWitt called a full-fledged atheist "church" — he wanted to bring some of the things that he had learned from his years as a religious leader to atheists in southern Louisiana. The percentage of religiously unaffiliated Americans appears to be on the rise. A [2012 Pew Research Center study](#) found that while only about 6 percent identified as atheist or agnostic, they were among nearly 20 percent classified as religiously unaffiliated. That was up from 15 percent in 2007, a greater increase than for any traditional faith.

Mr. DeWitt counts himself among the hard-line atheists, but he believes that something may be lost when someone leaves the church — not just the parts about God, but also a sense of community and a connection to emotion. "There are many people that even though they come to this realization, they miss the way the church works in a way that very few other communities can duplicate," he said in a phone interview. "The secular can learn that just because we value critical thinking and the scientific method, that doesn't mean we suddenly become disembodied and we can no longer benefit from our emotional lives." Some in the audience had a difficult time coming to atheism. Joshua Hammers, a member of an atheist organization in Lake Charles, said he had been completely separated from his community and social life when he left the Pentecostal church in which he was raised. For him, there was something comfortable, a reminder of childhood, about hearing Mr. DeWitt preach. "We were at the Reason on the Bayou conference, and everything else was just like a lecture," Mr. Hammers said, referring to a secular rally held in April at Louisiana State University. "Then Jerry got up, and he was just, you know, preaching the message. Most other atheist leaders are academics and intellectuals, and Jerry's not like that. He's just talking to your heart."

Services are gaining traction as outlets for organized atheism in places like London, Houston, Sacramento and New York, as well as at universities with humanist chaplains. In a deeply conservative region like the Deep South, they can serve a vital purpose: providing a sense of camaraderie in what many have found to be a hostile environment for nonreligious people. "Here, we have a very strong sense of community," said Russell Rush, a former youth pastor from DeRidder. "When you go into an actual church, it's almost like having a family reunion. When you leave that lifestyle, and leave that church life behind, a lot of times you can feel ostracized. Things like this let fellow atheists and agnostics know that they're not alone." Mr. DeWitt sees services like his as giving a human shape to a broad intellectual movement that is in its infancy. He believes that he and the others in the room are building something meant to last. "Though this movement has had starts and stops throughout world history, right now it's important to remember that *we are young*," he said after a singalong to a song of that name by the band Fun. "Someday, what you are doing will become normal. Isn't that a feeling?" (Dave Their, *The New York Times*, June 23, 2013)

Religion and Inequality

About a century ago, Walter Judd was a 17-year-old boy hoping to go to college at the University of Nebraska. His father pulled him aside and told him that, though the family had happily paid for Judd's two sisters to go to college, Judd himself would get no money for tuition or room and board.

His father explained that he thought his son might one day go on to become a fine doctor, but he had also seen loose tendencies. Some hard manual labor during college would straighten him out.

Judd took the train to the university, arrived at the station at 10:30 and by 12:15 had found a job washing dishes at the cafeteria of the Y.M.C.A. He did that job every day of his first year, rising at 6 each morning, not having his first college date until the last week of the school year. Judd went on to become a doctor, a daring medical missionary and a prominent member of Congress between 1943 and 1963. The anecdote is small, but it illustrates a few things. First, that, in those days, it was possible to work your way through college doing dishes. More important, that people then were more likely to assume that jobs at the bottom of the status ladder were ennobling and that jobs at the top were morally perilous. That is to say, the moral status system was likely to be the inverse of the worldly status system. The working classes were self-controlled, while the rich and the professionals could get away with things.

These mores, among other things, had biblical roots. In the Torah, God didn't pick out the most powerful or notable or populous nation to be his chosen people. He chose a small, lowly band. The Jewish Bible is filled with characters who are exiles or from the lower reaches of society who are, nonetheless, chosen for pivotal moments: Moses, Joseph, Saul, David and Esther. In the New Testament, Jesus blesses the poor, "for yours is the kingdom of God." But "woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort." 6In I Corinthians, Paul tells the crowds, "Not many of you were wise by worldly standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." Under this rubric, your place is not determined by worldly accomplishments, but simply through an acceptance of God's grace. As Paul Tillich put it in a passage recently quoted on Andrew Sullivan's blog, "Do not seek for anything; do not perform anything; do not intend anything. Simply accept the fact that you are accepted."

This inverse hierarchy took secular form. Proletarian novels and movies made the working class the moral bedrock of the nation. In Frank Capra movies like "Meet John Doe," the common man is the salt of the earth, while the rich are suspect. It wasn't as if Americans renounced worldly success (this is America!), but there were rival status hierarchies: the biblical

hierarchy, the working man's hierarchy, the artist's hierarchy, the intellectual's hierarchy, all of which questioned success and denounced those who climbed and sold out.

Over the years, religion has played a less dominant role in public culture. Meanwhile, the rival status hierarchies have fallen away. The meritocratic hierarchy of professional success is pretty much the only one left standing.

As a result, people are less ambivalent about commerce. We use economic categories, like "human capital" and "opportunity costs," in a wide range of spheres. People are less worried about what William James called the "moral flabbiness" of the "bitch-goddess success," and are more likely to use professional standing as a measure of life performance. Words like character, which once suggested traits like renunciation that held back success, now denote traits like self-discipline, which enhance it.

Many rich people once felt compelled to try to square their happiness at being successful with their embarrassment about it. They adopted what Charles Murray calls a code of seamliness (no fancy clothes or cars). Not long ago, many people covered their affluence with a bohemian patina, but that patina has grown increasingly thin.

Now most of us engage in more matter-of-fact boasting: the car stickers that describe the driver's summers on Martha's Vineyard, the college window stickers, the mass embrace of luxury brands, even the currency of "likes" on Facebook and Reddit as people unabashedly seek popularity. The culture was probably more dynamic when there were competing status hierarchies. When there is one hegemonic hierarchy, as there is today, the successful are less haunted by their own status and the less successful have nowhere to hide. (David Brooks, *New York Times*, June 13, 2013)

Are we caught in a happy trap?

Happy ever after: We want it for ourselves, we want it for our kids, and we want it now. But what if everything we know about happiness is a lie? What if the relentless pursuit of pleasure is in fact making us miserable?

A growing number of psychologists and social researchers now believe that the "feel-good, think positive" mindset of the modern self-help industry has backfired, creating a culture where uncomfortable emotions are seen as abnormal. And they warn that the concurrent rise of the self-esteem movement - encouraging parents to shower their children with praise - may be creating a generation of emotionally fragile narcissists. Some therapists believe this positivity obsession is partly to blame for rising rates of binge drinking, drug use and obesity. The more that genuine contentment eludes us, the more we seek to fill the gap with manufactured highs. But as we try to anaesthetise feelings of sadness, failure and disappointment, our rates of depression and anxiety continue to climb.

"So many people now think, 'If I'm not happy, there's something wrong with me.' We seem to have forgotten that feelings are like the weather - changing all the time; it's as normal to feel unhappy as it is to have rainy days," said Russ Harris, a British-born Australian doctor and author of **The Happiness Trap**, in which he argues popular wisdom on happiness is misleading and destined to make you miserable. "Painful emotions are increasingly seen as unnatural and abnormal and we refuse to accept that we can't always get what we want."

As the "happiness industry" of life coaches and self-help gurus has exploded, parents have been taught that self-esteem is the cardinal virtue for raising well-adjusted kids. But it has had unexpected consequences. Researchers say the value of hard work has been replaced by the belief that every child is "special" - a phenomenon fuelled by rampant consumerism and reality TV shows, which promise: "If you want it enough you can have anything."

Some of the world's leading happiness experts now fear that the self-esteem juggernaut will leave future generations hopelessly ill-equipped to deal with life's disappointments. On Wednesday, some of those experts will converge on Melbourne for the **Happiness and Its Causes conference**. Among the delegates will be Harris, and Carol Dweck, professor of psychology at Stanford University. "More and more, parents are unwilling to let their children struggle," she says. "They want them to feel good at all times so they're telling them how smart they are, they're really showering them with what we call person praise - 'you're talented, you're smart, you're special.' My research shows it backfires. It makes kids worried and tells them that the name of the game is to be smart."

"Then, when we give them harder problems they don't do well and they lie about their performance because their ego gets so wrapped up in all of this. But if we give them what we call process praise - 'you focused well, you tried hard, you used good strategies' - then it makes them want hard things, where they can apply their effort and strategies and be resilient." Professor Dweck urges parents to talk to their children not just about their victories but their struggles. Like Harris, she maintains that accepting setbacks and unpleasant emotions, rather than trying to block them out, is the key to building resilience. Already, clinicians are seeing the first casualties of the self-esteem movement entering therapy. In a 2011 Atlantic **article**, US psychotherapist Lori Gottlieb reported that many young adults - largely from happy, loving, advantaged homes - were feeling confused, anxious and empty due to overprotective parenting that focused too much on happiness and shielded them from adversity. Thrust into the real world, even minor setbacks became catastrophic. Australian social researcher Hugh Mackay addresses these issues in his latest book, **The Good Life: What Makes a Life Worth Living**, and says we must look beyond the pursuit of success and happiness as life's main aspirations. He believes that the self-help movement, which took off in the 1980s as a well-meaning antidote to rising rates of depression in Western society - born out of a turbulent period of social, economic and technological change - has morphed into a beast that sells happiness as a commodity.

"It's been hijacked by the pop psychology movement to suggest that we've all got to look for positive outcomes, that we've all got to be bright, shining optimists and extroverts. It's become an industry - there are conferences about it and a whole spate of books and talk shows and people on the lecture circuit who are feeding this idea that one of our emotions [happiness] is sovereign and that should be our default position."

Instead of viewing happiness as an entitlement, Mackay maintains that a sense of wholeness and meaning is what brings satisfaction. Indeed, he points out that **even those in the Buddhist faith are starting to question the Dalai Lama's tenet that the very purpose of life is to seek happiness**. "We have to nurture our relationships, our engagements with other people, our responsibility for other people's wellbeing - that's what nurtures community, and we are sustained by those

communities," Mackay says. "If we focus only on happiness we're neglecting the richness of the full emotional spectrum and we're overlooking the fact that you couldn't make sense of happiness if you didn't know sadness."

New Zealand psychologist Chris Skellett knows this only too well. His book, **When Happiness Is Not Enough**, explores how a fulfilling life can only be achieved by balancing being happy in the moment, with a drive towards longer-term goals. When he speaks at the conference this week it will be from a position of tragic, lived experience. Last month, his 21-year-old son Henry died suddenly and unexpectedly. While processing overwhelming grief, his understanding of the importance of the full range of human emotions has never been greater. "The loss gives you access to a wonderful array of very real human experiences, especially the connection between people," Skellett say. "Sadness is tinged with an incredibly profound depth of appreciation of life. You're acutely aware of what's important. A lot of the things that preoccupied me before seem rather trite and superficial now. Now, I'm much more connected to the little things. I'm much more profoundly moved by music. A walk in the evening just seems like a gift." (Jill Stark, *SMH*, June 16, 2013)

How Did 150,000,000 Europeans Come to Hate Israel?

George Orwell, in "1984", described the "Two Minute Hate". It has come to pass - against Jews.

"The Jewish religion is under attack in Europe", declared the Conference of European Rabbis president Pinchas Goldschmidt. Many polls (such as the study on behalf of the German Social Democratic Friedrich Ebert Foundation) bring an iconic number measuring the disaster: 150,000,000 Europeans have a delegitimizing and demonizing view of the State of Israel and its citizens. For a large sector of Europe, the cities, skyscrapers, hospitals, cinemas, and schools on that tiny sliver of land named "Israel" are merely real estate that will be restored to Islam once this malefic Jewish form is swept away. This is a popular mobilization against Israel in the "Raus mit Uns" spirit. 150,000,000 Western citizens believe that Zionism is a misconceived project to be brought to an end as soon as possible. It is the consequence of the Palestinian-Islamic psychological war (note: the European Union has just contributed 20 million euros to the payment of salaries and pensions for April of nearly 76,000 Palestinian Arabs).

See what happened to Europe's Jews in little more than a week.

In Hungary, where Adolf Eichmann obsessively hunted down all the Jews, a wave of fascist Judeophobia is poisoning the social cohesion and the head of the Raoul Wallenberg Association was injured in anti-Semitic attack.

A Labour party member in the UK, Nazir Ahmed, resigned after anti-Jewish remarks made on television.

A scientific genius, Stephen Hawking, embraced the racist boycott of the State of Israel.

The *BBC* planned a "documentary" claiming that the Jewish exodus from Jerusalem was a myth.

Dozens of French mayors rallied for the liberation of the Palestinian terrorists.

A Scottish Christian document erased the Jewish links with to the holy land.

In the French town of Villeurbanne, a rabbi and his son were stabbed.

It was an ordinary week of anti-Semitism in Europe.

The threat against Israel's existence has become strategic in Rome, Berlin, London, Paris, Budapest, Amsterdam and Stockholm. Indiscriminate hatred against the Jews pervades European parliaments as much as in the Muslim madrasses. The call for Israel's destruction echoes through Europe's schools and mosques, textbooks and newspapers, TV series and pseudo "documentaries". It is today's greatest manipulation of opinion, of the kind immortalized by George Orwell in 1984 as a "Two Minute Hate": Europe's publicists, civil servants and educators incite violence directly when they describe Jews as "bloodsuckers", "colonialists", and many similar epithets. One step at a time, Europe is subverting the legitimacy of the Jewish people once again. I have always felt an affinity with European intellectuals. But, it is with pain and surprise that I witness, one lifetime after Hitler's Holocaust, the willingness of all too many to collaborate in the monstrification of the Jews. This is how Europe built an anti-Semitic public opinion of 150,000,000. This is how Israel has become an expendable myth among the European educated classes.

"Peace" can come only with the recognition in the Middle East of Israel as a national state of the Jewish people; the addition of the State of Israel to all the maps used in schools in the Islamic world; the elimination of the extensive anti-Israeli propaganda campaigns in the Muslim media and schools; the promotion of interactions among scientists, scholars, artists, and athletes; the abandoning of the delegitimization of Israel at the United Nations; the outlawing of terrorist groups devoted to the killing of Israelis and the destruction of Israel; the end of the economic boycott against Israel; the institution of full diplomatic relations with Jerusalem as Israel's indivisible capital; and last but not least, the proclamation of theological fatwas prohibiting the murder of "infidels".

Europe is working hard to prevent all these necessary steps. Because according to Europe's mainstream, "peace" will prevail when Israel is dismantled, just like tranquility will prevail in the "Holy Land" when Zionism has been eliminated. Europe is witnessing the creation of a majority according to which Israel is a superpower with extraordinary military power and wealth and as a committed and merciless enemy of humanity. Europe's public opinion has been persuaded to believe that Israel is a state that ought to be dismantled forthwith. Europe's population count today is 730,000, 000 citizens. What would happen if the anti-Semitic worm infected the mind of all of them? Can Israel really remain immune from that eruption of psychotic anti-Jewish illness? Giulio Meotti, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, May 17, 2013)

Dramatic apology to victims of church abuse

Church knew of 'serious risk' to children

Even though the Catholic Church had "extensive knowledge dating back to the 1950s" of the "serious risk posed to children" by the paedophile priest Denis McAlinden, he continued sexually abusing children for decades before he was removed from the priesthood in 1993, an inquiry has heard.

The Bishop of the church's Maitland-Newcastle diocese, Bill Wright, made a dramatic, unreserved apology from the witness box to victims and their families at the inquiry into an alleged police and church cover-up of child sex abuse allegations against two priests in the Hunter region on Monday morning. Bishop Wright's apology is believed to be the most comprehensive acknowledgement of child sex abuse in the Catholic Church yet made by a serving church leader. He acknowledged that McAlinden and another priest, James Fletcher, both now dead, were "sexual predators" who "repeatedly committed acts of sexual abuse against children", using their positions of trust in the church to gain access to the children and to conceal their acts. The inquiry heard that one victim complained in 2001 that she had been abused by McAlinden in 1977 when she was four years old. Bishop Wright said the abuse perpetrated by the priests was "exacerbated on occasion by the failures of church leaders" and had caused "real and enduring harm" to the victims, their families and many others.

"My apology is intended to express the deep sorrow of the Catholic community that such things ever happened to people in our church; our desire that the victims now have the chance to tell their stories with confidence of acceptance and are able to obtain justice to the extent that this is possible; our commitment to assisting those that were abused as best we can; and our commitment to doing all in our power to protect children from such abuse now and into the future", Bishop Wright said. He acknowledged that the children were hurt further when they were not believed because the offender was a priest, and that church officials had failed to act or act effectively to support the victims and their families and ensure the offences were not repeated.

The inquiry heard yesterday that several church documents dating from 1993 contained reference to admissions by Father McAlinden. One victim specifically asked that her statement of complaint against McAlinden be made available as corroboration for other victims, but this request was not passed on to police until many years later. By the time police learnt of it, in 2005, McAlinden was in Western Australia dying of the last stages of cancer. He was never charged with offences relating to his time in the Hunter region. The victim who wanted her statement used as corroboration was told by the diocese in 2002 McAlinden had a known history of child abuse and "a file you could jump over". (Catherine Armitage, *SMH*, July 1, 2013)

Syrian Jihadists Publicly Behead Catholic Priest

Terrorists behead priest accused of collaborating with Assad's regime, then post a video of the beheading online. A Catholic priest has been publicly beheaded by Syrian terrorists after he was accused of collaborating with President Bashar Al-Assad's regime. Franciscan Father Francois Murad was executed along with two other people in the countryside of Idlib in northern Syria on Sunday, the *New York Daily News* reported. The brutal beheading was filmed and posted to the Internet. The Vatican confirmed Murad's death Monday, but the circumstances surrounding the 49-year-old priest's death are not entirely known, reported the *Daily News*.

Spectators recorded the killings that included two others with their smartphones and cameras before uploading it online. Local sources told the Vatican that convent for the Custody of the Holy Land, where Murad had taken refuge [sic], was ambushed by terrorists linked to the jihadist group Jabhat al-Nusra (Al-Nusra Front).

In the video, which *Israel National News* has chosen not to post here due its graphic nature, a man identified as Murad is seen sitting cross-legged in the grass with his hands bound as a mob of men around him shout in Arabic.

Several are seen shamelessly holding up cameras to record the horrific killings, stepping as close as they can to the aftermath of bloody bodies. According to the Vatican's press release quoted by the *Daily News*, Murad traveled to the area after becoming an ordained priest to help construct a coenobitic monastery.

The radical, jihadist Al-Nusra Front has **pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda** chief Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Al-Nusra is one of 13 factions in the radical Islamist rebel council that **announced its secession** from the main opposition force and declared its own Islamic state in Aleppo. The group was recently **blacklisted by the United Nations Security Council**. (Elad Benari, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, July 2, 2013)

The Church's Errand Shepherds

BOSTON, Philadelphia, Los Angeles. The archdioceses change but the overarching story line doesn't, and last week Milwaukee had a turn in the spotlight, with the release of roughly 6,000 pages of records detailing decades of child sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests there, a sweeping, searing encyclopedia of crime and insufficient punishment. But the words I keep marveling at aren't from that wretched trove. They're from an open letter that Jerome Listeki, the archbishop of Milwaukee, wrote to Catholics just before the documents came out.

"Prepare to be shocked," he said.

What a quaint warning, and what a clueless one. Quaint because at this grim point in 2013, a quarter-century since child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church first captured serious public attention, few if any Catholics are still surprised by a priest's predations. Clueless because Listeki was referring to the rapes and molestations themselves, not to what has ultimately eroded many Catholics' faith and what continues to be even more galling than the evil that a man — any man, including one in a cassock or collar — can do. I mean the evil that an entire institution can do, though it supposedly dedicates itself to good. I mean the way that a religious organization can behave almost precisely as a corporation does, with fudged words, twisted logic and a transcendent instinct for self-protection that frequently trump the principled handling of a specific grievance or a particular victim.

The Milwaukee documents underscore this, especially in the person of Cardinal Timothy Dolan, now the archbishop of New York, previously the archbishop of Milwaukee from 2002 to 2009 and thus one of the characters in [the story that the documents tell](#). Last week's headlines rightly focused on his part, because he typifies the

slippery ways of too many Catholic leaders. The documents show that in 2007, as the Milwaukee archdiocese grappled with sex-abuse lawsuits and seemingly pondered bankruptcy, Dolan sought and got permission from the Vatican to transfer \$57 million into a trust for Catholic cemetery maintenance, where it might be better protected, as he wrote, “from any legal claim and liability.” Several church officials have said that the money had been previously flagged for cemetery care, and that Dolan was merely formalizing that. But even if that’s so, his letter contradicts his strenuous insistence before its emergence that he never sought to shield church funds. He did precisely that, no matter the nuances of the motivation. He’s expert at drafting and dwelling in gray areas. Back in Milwaukee he selectively released the names of sexually abusive priests in the archdiocese, declining to identify those affiliated with, and answerable to, particular religious orders — Jesuits, say, or Franciscans. He said that he was bound by canon law to take that exact approach. But bishops elsewhere took a different one, identifying priests from orders, and in a 2010 article on Dolan in *The Times*, Serge F. Kovalski wrote that a half-dozen [experts on canon law said](#) that it did not specifically address the situation that Dolan claimed it did.

Dolan has quibbled disingenuously over whether [the \\$20,000 given](#) to each abusive priest in Milwaukee who agreed to be defrocked can be characterized as a payoff, and he has blasted the main national group representing victims of priests as having [“no credibility whatsoever.”](#) Some of the group’s members have surely engaged in crude, provocative tactics, but let’s have a reality check: the group exists because of widespread crimes and a persistent cover-up in the church, because child after child was raped and priest after priest evaded accountability. I’m not sure there’s any ceiling on the patience that Dolan and other church leaders should be expected to muster, especially because they hold themselves up as models and messengers of love, charity and integrity. That’s the thing. That’s what church leaders and church defenders who routinely question the amount of attention lavished on the church’s child sexual abuse crisis still don’t fully get. Yes, as they point out, there are molesters in all walks of life. Yes, we can’t say with certainty that the priesthood harbors a disproportionate number of them. But over the last few decades we’ve watched an organization that claims a special moral authority in the world pursue many of the same legal and public-relations strategies — shuttling around money, looking for loopholes, tarring accusers, massaging the truth — that are employed by organizations devoted to nothing more than the bottom line.

In San Diego, diocesan leaders who filed for bankruptcy were rebuked by a judge for misrepresenting the local church’s financial situation to parishioners being asked to help pay for sex-abuse settlements. In St. Louis church leaders claimed not to be liable for an abusive priest because while he had gotten to know a victim on church property, the abuse itself happened elsewhere. In Kansas City, Mo., Rebecca Randles, a lawyer who has represented abuse victims, says that the church floods the courtroom with attorneys who in turn drown her in paperwork. In one case, she recently told me, “the motion-to-dismiss pile is higher than my head — I’m 5-foot-4.”

Also in Kansas City, Bishop Robert Finn still inhabits his post as the head of the diocese despite his conviction last September for [failing to report a priest suspected of child sexual abuse](#) to the police. This is how the church is in fact unlike a corporation. It coddles its own at the expense of its image. As for Dolan, he is by many accounts and appearances one of the good guys, or at least one of the better ones. He has often demonstrated a necessary vigor in ridding the priesthood of abusers. He has given many victims a voice. But look at the language in this 2005 letter he wrote to the Vatican, which was among the [documents released last week](#). Arguing for the speedier dismissal of an abusive priest, he noted, in cool legalese, “The liability for the archdiocese is great as is the potential for scandal if it appears that no definitive action has been taken.” His attention to appearances, his focus on liability: he could be steering an oil company through a spill, a pharmaceutical giant through a drug recall. As for “the potential for scandal,” that’s as poignantly optimistic a line as Lister’s assumption that the newly released Milwaukee documents would shock Catholics. By 2005 the scandal that Dolan mentions wasn’t looming but already full blown, and by last week the only shocker left was that some Catholic leaders don’t grasp its greatest component: their evasions and machinations. (Frank Bruni, *International Herald Tribune*, July 6, 2013)

School principal disputes Bishop Malone's evidence

Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Lateline: Broadcast: 15/07/2013, Reporter: Suzie Smith

Former school principal, William Callinan, has told the Newcastle inquiry into sexual abuse in the Catholic Church that former Bishop, Michael Malone, did not warn him that Father James Fletcher was under police investigation for sexual assault and rape.

Transcript

EMMA ALBERICI, PRESENTER: A Catholic bishop in Newcastle has been accused of doctoring his diaries and misleading a New South Wales Government inquiry into the cover-up of child sexual abuse.

A school principal today denied claims by Bishop Michael Malone that the bishop had warned him about a paedophile priest at his school. From Newcastle, Suzie Smith reports.

SUZIE SMITH, REPORTER: It was 20th June, 2002 and Father James Fletcher had just been placed under investigation for sexual assault and rape of a victim known as “A.H.”

Bishop Malone and several priests travelled to Fletcher’s presbytery at Branxton, near Newcastle to support the accused. But Bishop Malone has admitted that this had the effect of tipping off the priest and ruining the element of surprise for police investigators. This inquiry has already heard that the investigating officer Peter Fox urged Bishop Malone to stand Father Fletcher aside and end his access to children. Instead Bishop Malone widened Father Fletcher’s duties to take in the neighbouring parish of Lochinvar. Bishop Malone told the inquiry that on the day of the visit to Fletcher’s presbytery at Branxton, he met with the principal of a neighbouring school to warn him about the police investigation.

Through his legal counsel, that principal, William Callinan, denied the meeting ever took place, because he says he was at another school. The next year in 2003, after the NSW Ombudsman had launched his own investigation into the matter, the

former principal said that Bishop Malone had made a phone call to him where he tried to force him to agree that there indeed had been a meeting between him and the bishop where the bishop had warned him about Father Fletcher.

WILLIAM POTTER, LEGAL COUNSEL FOR WILLIAM CALLINAN (male voiceover): "Would it be right to say you as Bishop, if you choose to exercise it, you have the power to see that Mr Callinan lost his job?"

MICHAEL MALONE, BISHOP (male voiceover): "Oh, that is a bit tough. I suppose ultimately I had that authority, but I am not the sort of person who uses authority like that."

WILLIAM POTTER (male voiceover): "I am not suggesting you would, but I'm talking about the structure of the system ... that structure I would suggest to you made you confident in March, 2003, when you said to Mr Callinan: 'You and I discussed this last year ...,' that he wouldn't question you about that?"

BISHOP MALONE (male voiceover): "No, not really, no. I mean, you're suggesting I have intimidated Mr Callinan? I would never have done that."

SUZIE SMITH: Mr Callinan also alleged Bishop Malone had changed a diary entry to reflect this falsehood when the diaries were requested for the Ombudsman's investigation in 2003. Bishop Malone denied the allegation.

The principal also alleged Bishop Malone ordered him to tell people that Father Fletcher was "sick" and use "illness as an excuse" rather than divulge the police investigation. Again, this was denied by Bishop Malone.

After his evidence, Bishop Malone made a statement of profound regret and apology.

MICHAEL MALONE: My 17 years as Bishop of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle saw a gradual awakening in me to the horror of sexual abuse in the Church. During those years the Diocese moved from shock and disbelief to an angry rejection of such criminal behaviour of some clergy and Church personnel. It will probably take some years to rebuild lost confidence in the Catholic Church. (Suzie Smith, *ABC Lateline*, July 15, 2013)

Some Mormons Search the Web and Find Doubt

A Mormon Doubts: Hans Mattsson was once a high-ranking leader for the Mormon church in Europe. He joins others who are experiencing a crisis of faith and finding few answers from their church.

In the small but cohesive Mormon community where he grew up, Hans Mattsson was a solid believer and a pillar of the church. He followed his father and grandfather into church leadership and finally became an "area authority" overseeing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout Europe.

When fellow believers in Sweden first began coming to him with information from the Internet that contradicted the church's history and teachings, he dismissed it as "anti-Mormon propaganda," the whisperings of Lucifer. He asked his superiors for help in responding to the members' doubts, and when they seemed to only sidestep the questions, Mr. Mattsson began his own investigation. But when he discovered credible evidence that the church's founder, Joseph Smith, was a polygamist and that the Book of Mormon and other scriptures were rife with historical anomalies, Mr. Mattsson said he felt that the foundation on which he had built his life began to crumble.

Around the world and in the United States, where the faith was founded, the Mormon Church is grappling with a wave of doubt and disillusionment among members who encountered information on the Internet that sabotaged what they were taught about their faith, according to interviews with dozens of Mormons and those who study the church. "I felt like I had an earthquake under my feet," said Mr. Mattsson, now an emeritus area authority. "Everything I'd been taught, everything I'd been proud to preach about and witness about just crumbled under my feet. It was such a terrible psychological and nearly physical disturbance."

Mr. Mattsson's decision to go public with his disaffection, in a church whose top leaders commonly deliberate in private, is a sign that the church faces serious challenges not just from outside but also from skeptics inside.

Greg Prince, a Mormon historian and businessman in Washington who has held local leadership positions in the church, shares Mr. Mattsson's doubts. "Consider a Catholic cardinal suddenly going to the media and saying about his own church, 'I don't buy a lot of this stuff,'" Mr. Prince said. "That's the level we're talking about here."

He said of Mr. Mattsson, "He is, as far as I know, the highest-ranking church official who has gone public with deep concerns, who has had a faith crisis and come forward to say he's going to talk about it because maybe that will help us all to resolve it." Every faith has its skeptics and detractors, but the Mormon Church's history creates special challenges. The church was born in America only 183 years ago, and its founder and prophet, Joseph Smith, and his disciples left behind reams of papers that still exist, documenting their work, exposing their warts and sometimes contradicting one another. "The Roman Catholic Church has had 2,000 years to work through the hiccups in its history," said Terryl L. Givens, a professor of English, literature and religion at the University of Richmond and a Mormon believer. "Mormonism is still an adolescent religion."

Mr. Givens and his wife, Fiona, recently presented what they called "Crucible of Doubt" sessions for questioning Mormons in England, Scotland and Ireland. Hundreds attended each event. "Sometimes they are just this side of leaving, and sometimes they are simply faithful members who are looking for clarity and understanding to add to their faith," said Mr. Givens, who hosted a similar discussion in July in Provo, Utah, and has others planned in the United States. The church is not sponsoring the sessions, Mr. Givens said, but local bishops give their permission.

Eric Hawkins, a church spokesman, said that "every church faces this challenge," adding, "The answer is not to try to silence critics, but to provide as much information and as much support as possible to those who may be affected." Mr. Hawkins also said the Mormon Church, which counts 14 million members worldwide, added about one million members every three years. But Mr. Mattsson and others say the disillusionment is infecting the church's best and brightest. A survey of more than 3,300 Mormon disbelievers, released last year, found that more than half of the men and four in 10 of the women had served in leadership positions in the church. Many said they had suffered broken relationships with their parents, spouses and children as a result of their disbelief. The study was conducted by John Dehlin, a Ph.D. student in psychology at Utah State University and the founder of "Mormon Stories," a podcast of interviews with scholars and church members, many critical toward the church.

Some church leaders are well aware of the doubters in their midst. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, who serves in the church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (the governing body just below the three-member First Presidency), said in April while addressing the church's semiannual general conference in Salt Lake City: "Please don't hyperventilate if from time to time issues arise that need to be examined, understood and resolved. They do, and they will."

Mr. Mattsson served as a young missionary in England; his wife, Birgitta, is a convert. They raised their five children in the Mormon Church in Sweden, which dates to the 1850s and has about 9,000 members.

He and his twin brother, Leif, both rose through the ranks of leadership, and in 2000, Hans Mattsson became the first Swede ever to be named an area authority. (He served until 2005, when he had heart surgery.) During the week he worked in technology marketing, and on the weekends he traveled widely throughout Europe, preaching and organizing the believers. "I was just in a bubble, and we felt so happy," Mr. Mattsson said.

The first doubts filtered up to him from members who had turned to the Internet to research a Sunday school talk. There are dozens of Web sites other than the Mormons' own that present critical views of the faith.

The questions were things like:

- Why does the church always portray Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon from golden plates, when witnesses described him looking down into a hat at a "peep stone," a rock that he believed helped him find buried treasure?

- Why were black men excluded from the priesthood from the mid-1800s until 1978?

- Why did Smith claim that the Book of Abraham, a core scripture, was a translation of ancient writings from the Hebrew patriarch Abraham, when Egyptologists now identify the papyrus that Smith used in the translation as a common funerary scroll that has nothing to do with Abraham?

- Is it true that Smith took dozens of wives, some as young as 14 and some already wed to other Mormon leaders, to the great pain of his first wife, Emma?

About that last question, Mr. Mattsson said, "That was kind of shocking."

Mr. Mattsson said he sought the help of the church's highest authorities. He said a senior apostle came to Sweden at his request and told a meeting of Mormons that he had a manuscript in his briefcase that, once it was published, would prove all the doubters wrong. But Mr. Mattsson said the promised text never appeared, and when he asked the apostle about it, he was told it was impertinent to ask.

(Mr. Mattsson refused to identify the apostle, but others said it was Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Perry, now 91, confirmed through a church spokesman that he did visit a branch in Sweden with skeptical members, but said he recalled satisfying their questions with a letter written by the church's history department.) That encounter is what really set off Mr. Mattsson's doubts. He began reading everything he could. He listened to the "Mormon Stories" podcasts. And he read "Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling," a biography by Richard Lyman Bushman, a historian at Columbia University and a prominent Mormon.

Mr. Bushman said in a telephone interview: "You would be amazed at the number of Mormons who don't think Joseph Smith practiced polygamy. It just wasn't talked about. It was never mentioned in church periodicals. That was policy." In the last 10 or 15 years, he said, "the church has come to realize that transparency and candor and historical accuracy are really the only way to go." The church has released seven volumes of the papers of Joseph Smith and published an essay on one of the most shameful events in church history, the Mountain Meadows massacre, in which church leaders plotted the slaughter of people in a wagon train in 1857.

But the church has not actively disseminated most of these documents, so when members come across them on Web sites or in books, Mr. Bushman said, "it's just excruciating."

"Sometimes people are furious because they feel they haven't been told the truth growing up," he said. "They feel like they were tricked or betrayed." Mr. Mattsson said that when he started sharing what he had learned with other Mormons in Sweden, the stake president (who oversees a cluster of congregations) told him not to talk about it to any members, even his wife and children. He did not obey: "I said to them, why are you afraid for the truth?"

He organized a discussion group in Sweden, and more than 600 participated, he said. In 2010, the church sent two of its top historians, Elder Marlin K. Jensen and Richard E. Turley Jr. to allay the Swedes' concerns. They had a remarkably frank and sometimes testy exchange, especially about Smith and polygamy.

The Mattssons have tried other churches, but they are still attached to their Mormon faith. A few weeks ago, they moved to Spain for health reasons, they said. They left behind some family members who are unhappy with Mr. Mattsson's decision to grant interviews to The New York Times and to the "Mormon Stories" podcast. "I don't want to hurt the church," Mr. Mattsson said. "I just want the truth." (Laurie Goodstein, *New York Times*, July 20, 2012)