

ON THE BRINK OF CATASTROPHE

“This world is headed for absolute catastrophe at 1000 miles an hour and we are not even going to die with dignity. That's the horror of it all.’ The man who has everything and has done everything appears to agonise over what still needs to be done - including saving the planet. ‘That's what keeps me going. I mean, enough is enough.’” (The Weekend Australian, Global Warfare, March 23, 1994).

These are the words of Ted Turner, owner of the highly successful CNN International Broadcasting Network, a man who knows news and understands world developments. Since 1990, we have been proclaiming a similar message to the leaders of the world, yet everyone still behaves as if everything is normal.

America's businessmen know more about the true condition of the world than do its prophets. At a time when their voice is needed more than ever, its prophets have fallen silent. Why? Is it because they know that if we are right they are doomed?

We have proven more than once that the gospel they are preaching is not the right one, that there has been a great falling away from the truth of God, yet they continue to ignore our Gospel and the damage they are causing to their followers and the world with their gospel.

Since we started this work, in accordance with biblical prophecies, we have shown “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:14,22), and revealed more biblical prophecies than anyone else, yet our messages continue to be ignored and we still “cry in the wilderness”. In previous editions, we revealed the prophecies about the “false prophet”, the “abomination of desolation”, the “holy place”, and others, and in this edition, we continue that work by revealing the prophecy about the end time “beast” which will plunge the world into the great tribulation.

Biblical prophecies are revealed before they are fulfilled, as a warning of God's impending intervention in world affairs. For the world this is bad news, but for the people of God this is great news. Our salvation is truly at hand. There has never been greater proof of God's involvement in world affairs than fulfilled prophecy. The time has arrived for humanity to choose between God and Satan, between the ways of life and the ways of death.

The leading forces in the world are determined to wipe out any trace of holiness from the world. They do not realise that in so doing they are leading the world to catastrophe and digging their own grave. The United Nations, with whom rested the hope of humanity for a world of “peace, justice, and prosperity,” has proven once again that it is totally bankrupt, morally and spiritually.

The genocide in Bosnia is a case in point. The UN tied the hands of one of the combatants, and left the other armed to the teeth. Then they claimed the high moral ground on pretence of even-handedness. The commander of the UN troops in Bosnia even went before the world media to denounce the Bosnian soldiers as cowards for running away from the advancing Serbian forces. They expected the Bosnians to fight with handguns against the Serbian tanks.

The Bosnian government and people fell into the trap of believing the United Nations' guarantees of protection in the so-called “safe heavens” in spite of all evidence to the contrary.

What the media headlines do not tell you is that there is a hidden agenda in the Bosnian war. European leaders do not want to see a Muslim state established in the heart of Europe. Hence, their reluctance to intervene and stop the Serbian onslaught. It is only after the Bosnian government accepted a form of federated union with Croatia that the first serious attempts were made to force a settlement.

What we have in the Balkans, and in many other places, is not a localised ethnic war, but a fully-fledged religious war. The Orthodox Church in particular is on the march, and the world better take note. The Russian Orthodox Church may have suffered a serious setback when its wayward child - the communist system - collapsed, but its dream of conquering the world has not diminished.

As those in power around the world are beginning to realise that this planet cannot sustain even the present population let alone the explosion which threatens to double it within a generation, you will see leaders taking desperate measures in an effort to maximise their people's survival. Since no other force has proven as enduring and as capable of rousing people's hopes and pride in times of national and international stress, you will soon see religious leaders calling on their faithful to march again under their religion's standards. The results will be catastrophic for the world. Jesus' warning that unless God intervenes to put a stop to this human madness no flesh would be left alive, will finally be fulfilled.

The slide into the precipice has been accelerated by the recent decision of the United Nations to become the moral and spiritual policeman of the world. Not in upholding God's law, but Satan's rule.

The case of the Tasmanian homosexual who took his case to the United Nations is well known. The UN Human Rights Committee demanded that the Tasmanian Government overturn its anti-gay provisions from its Criminal Code because they violated “basic human rights”.

“I am amazed that a UN human rights committee would consider it a basic human right that people should be able to commit sodomy,” said the Tasmanian Attorney-General, Mr Ron Cornish.

[But] a Melbourne University law lecturer who has been an adviser to the Tasmanian gays, Mr Wayne Morgan, said the UN findings on sexual orientation made it likely that other cases of discrimination on similar grounds from other countries would succeed.” (SMH, April 12, 1994).

Of course! All that is needed is for the ground to be broken in one country and the floods of hell are opened everywhere. People may well remember that the first public demonstrations by the “gay liberation movement” took place in New York in the early 1970's. Only two decades later this cancer is well established all over the world and upheld by many national, and now

international, governing bodies. In all major world centres, the most vocal and visible demonstrators are those demanding their "liberation": "homosexual liberation", "feminist liberation", "lesbian liberation", "animal liberation", "paedophile liberation", "gluttony liberation" and now "transgender liberation".

The day the UN Human Rights Committee decided for homosexuality, the Australian public broadcasting network - the ABC - presented a lengthy panel discussion on the plight of the transvestite people ("transgenders", as they like to be called). They were complaining that the UN decision does nothing for them. Being free to do whatever they want in private is not good enough. They want to be able to go out in public, tell people about their gender preferences, and be loved for it. But when they do that they say that they usually get bashed, and they wonder why? Now, they want the United Nations to do something for them too. And, nice and obliging as those at the UN are, they will no doubt find a way to uphold the transgenders' "basic rights" too.

The degrees of moral, spiritual and physical degradations in this world have reached such a level that unless God intervenes to save His people soon there will be nothing left to save. The world is quickly reaching the level in which it will be impossible for anyone to lead a holy life.

Jesus Christ said that His followers are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot (Matt.5:13). The earth without the people of God will be good for nothing but to be destroyed. The Scriptures say that "when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished" (Dan. 12:7). Who are the holy people in these dangerous times if not those who preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God?

People around the world may have heard of, or seen on their television sets, the charade called "Sydney Gay Mardi Gras Festival" which takes place in this city once a year. Sydney is fast becoming the world centre for the most audacious homosexual behaviour. During their festival, which is attended by their likes from all over the world, they compete in displaying themselves in a parade through the streets of Sydney in highly provocative and vulgar poses and costumes. After the parade, they congregate in a large stadium where they indulge in their "basic rights" all night long.

During the parade, they vilify, ridicule, and lampoon political and religious figures, angels and deities, and anyone they hold a grudge against. One of their favourite caricatures is dressing like Catholic nuns and calling themselves, "sisters of perpetual indulgence".

Last year, the New South Wales Government introduced draconian legislation that prohibits anyone from "vilifying" homosexual people, but does not prohibit the homosexuals from doing the same to the "straight" people. In this state, one can blaspheme, take the name of God in vain, and say anything he wants against God, Jesus Christ and the angels, but heaven help those who dare speak against a homosexual. They can lose their house and spend 20 years in jail.

New South Wales has become the first state in the history of the world to have officially turned from Christianity to paganism. The leaders of traditional Christianity supported the passage of the gay anti-vilification bill in the NSW parliament. One major denomination even spent heavily on media advertising in support of that bill. Because they no longer regard homosexuality as a sin, they want to prevent us from speaking against it too. But we cannot obey a law that goes against the law of God and against our conscience.

The New South Wales and Australian Governments provided many thousands of dollars to prostitute collectives and hundreds of thousands of dollars to homosexual organisations. Why? For "educational purposes"! Naturally they provided nothing for us; we are not "educational". Admittedly, we did not request anything - we are bound by our Christian principles never to impose ourselves on the public. Nevertheless, since our magazines were sent to all the State and Federal ministers, as they are to all the world leaders, they could have made a gesture of support.

Throughout history, the servants of God received more honour from foreigners than from their own people. We are grateful to the Kings, Presidents, Prime Ministers and other national leaders who have sent us words of gratitude and encouragement. However, this is no longer enough. Nothing short of complete repentance will suffice this time. No refuge in concrete bunkers, in deserts, or in mountaintops will save anyone from the coming wrath of God.

One of our readers suggested that we go to the church leaders and tell them about our work because, "many would be happy to help us produce a better quality magazine." Our articles, she said, deserve to be made known to more people. She did not know that these magazines have been sent to as many national and religious leaders as we could locate. It made little difference.

Now our call for repentance is accompanied by definitive proof that dark clouds are gathering from the north over the whole world. If they ignore these writings now they do so at their own peril and that of their own people.

"Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and receiving of the Holy Spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven is truly at hand" (Acts 2:38; Matt.3:2)...

"My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also FOR THE WHOLE WORLD.

"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him... He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him...

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

"Little children, **it is the last hour**; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that **it is the last hour**." (1John 2:1-4, 9-10, 15-17).

THE "SPLENDOUR" OF THE CATHOLIC "TRUTH"

In 1993, the Vatican published Pope John Paul II's encyclical, "The Splendour of Truth". We decided to investigate what the "Splendour of the [Catholic] Truth" is all about. This is what we found.

Millions of people around the world go to church on Sundays and celebrate Easter, Christmas and various saints days in the belief that these are the Holy Days Jesus Christ wanted them to observe. What they do not know is that even today, nearly two thousand years after the establishment of the first New Testament churches, there are still a large number of Christians who worship on Saturdays and celebrate the Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread, Day of Atonement and the Feasts of Weeks, Trumpets and Tabernacles.

Sometime in the history of the Christian Church, a great schism occurred which split the "body of Christ" into two irreconcilable camps. The questions are: when did this schism occur, why did it happen, who was responsible for it, and which side should one follow for it is clear that both camps cannot be right.

Whenever this issue has been debated in the past, a whole range of obscure, difficult to obtain, ancient sources have been quoted to support one viewpoint or another, with the result that the average people were in no position to discover the truth and decide for themselves. It was more convenient to leave the matter to those who were "educated" in the Scriptures, in the belief that they knew what they were doing. Surely thousands of priests, ministers, church leaders, evangelists and millions of their followers could not be wrong, could they?

You will be surprised to know how many people preach what they ought not to and how little attention most churchmen have paid to the teachings of the Bible. Fortunately, our society has provided the means by which anyone can discover the truth without much difficulty. All one has to do is go to the local library and search in any of the major encyclopaedias under such topics as : Sunday, Easter, Christmas, Passover, Quartodecimans, calendar, Roman religion, Holy Days, and whatever other topics these articles may refer you to. Of course, the indispensable guide in such studies is the Bible for, in the final analysis, it alone can tell us what we need to know about the correct Christian Holy Days, salvation, and any other questions of Christian concern.

If you undertake such a study, you will discover that at the time Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, a major controversy erupted over the question of the correct Holy Days. A minority group advocated the observance of the "Jewish" Holy Days, while the majority sought to establish a new set of "Christian" Holy Days. The Council of Nicaea in 325 AD resolved this dispute in favor of the majority and decreed that those who adhered to the Jewish Holy Days be declared heretics. The problem is that when the Roman ecclesiastical authorities took this decision, they did not use the Bible as their guide, but the writings of the so-called, "Church Fathers." What follows is an account of the implications of this decision from the respected *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

"The Julian calendar brought order into the computation of dates and, being in principle a solar calendar, was successful in correlating the civil and astronomical years over a long period, thus keeping the seasons and the months in step. However, it could act only as a guide for the regulation of the dates of religious festivals in the Christian Church because the chief of these were founded on events dated by the Jewish lunar calendar. The Christian Church had therefore to find a method of reckoning these festivals and of synchronizing the observance of each by Christians throughout the world."

Why? Why couldn't the new "Christian Church" continue to reckon these religious festivals according to the Jewish lunar calendar? The Jews had been observing these festivals for over a thousand years and had no difficulty synchronising their observance in the countries in which they were scattered by the various invaders. By the time this became an issue with the Romans, the earlier Christian Church had been observing these "religious festivals" for more than two centuries too. They did not have difficulties with the lunar calendar either.

It was not the Christian Church which needed a new way of reckoning these "religious festivals," but the Roman Church, and that for reasons other than the ones stated here, as it shall become obvious shortly.

"This necessitated the construction of a combined lunisolar calendar. Those festivals based on Jewish reckoning were movable, i.e., they were held on a different date each year in consequence of their dependence on the phases of the moon; while those established by later ecclesiastical decree, e.g., commemorations of saints, could be immovable, i.e., on the same date each year, through being reckoned by the solar calendar and not by the lunar. The earliest question to be decided was the date of Easter, which is the most important of the church's festivals and from which the dates of all other "movable" feasts are determined." (Underlining ours).

Indeed, if Easter could be given a new date and meaning and be isolated from its Jewish roots, all the other "Jewish" Holy Days could be done away with too and a new set of "Christian" Holy Days be created.

"There arose by the 2nd century AD, disputes among Christians concerning the date on which it was proper to celebrate Easter. Because the crucifixion occurred before the Jewish Passover,"

The crucifixion occurred on the day of the Jewish Passover, not before it. It occurred at the beginning of the Days of Unleavened Bread. This is what Moses told the people of Israel when they were delivered from Egyptian slavery: "And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households'" (Ex.12:26-27). Jesus Christ became the Passover sacrifice for those who believe - He died on that day not before it.

"Easter was computed according to the Jews' mode of determining this festival. The Passover was ordained to be celebrated on the 14th day of the first month of the new year; i.e., of the lunar month whose 14th day falls on or next following the vernal equinox.

Notice how cleverly and unassumingly the authors cross over from Easter to Passover. They know that originally Easter was another name for Passover, but from here on Easter and Passover take on different meanings. "The word Easter, which comes from the Anglo-Saxon, is a term derived from the pagan goddess of the dawn. The Latin variation, Pascha, is from Hebrew antecedents; it is derived from the Passover, or their freedom from the Egyptians, which is celebrated in the Jewish calendar of feasts." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, article under Easter, p.177). Back to the *Britannica*:

"However, because the civil calendar was of solar origin and because Sunday was the main day for Christian congregational worship, it became generally agreed that the Sunday next following the date of the old Jewish Passover should be the date set aside for Easter."

Sunday was not the main day for Christian congregational worship during the apostolic age. Saturday was.

In many countries, Easter is still called Pascha - the Latin name for Passover. The Romans, however, sought to change both its date and its meaning for reasons which had nothing to do with standardising its observance throughout the empire, and more to do with synchronising its observance to coincide with the worship of an old god - the Sun god - whose symbol it became shortly afterwards.

"There were, however, those who wished to take a more literal view and to observe the exact Jewish date and so celebrate Easter on the 14th day of the lunar month; i.e., on the day usually conceded to be the time of the full moon."

The early Christians celebrated the Passover on the 14th of the lunar month because the Apostles did so. For them, the question of changing the "Jewish" Holy Days with "Christian" Holy Days never arose. They simply continued to observe the Old Testament Holy Days in the spirit of the New Testament. It was only when the Romans took interest in Christianity that this became an issue.

"These literalists, or Quartodecimans, as they were called, were a minority and were regarded as heretics.

Wasn't that wonderful? People who were not Christians came into the Church and regarded as heretics those who were observing their Christian traditions.

"In 325 the ecumenical Council of Nicaea ordained that Easter day should thenceforth be celebrated on the Sunday immediately following either that full moon which occurs on the day of the vernal equinox or, if there is no full moon on that day, then on the Sunday following that full moon which occurs next after the day of the vernal equinox or, if there is no full moon on that day, then on the Sunday following that full moon which occurs next after the day of the vernal equinox. In order to prevent the festival from coinciding with either the Jewish Passover or with the celebrations of the Quartodecimans, special provision was made, should the full moon actually occur on a Sunday, to defer the celebrations of Easter until the next Sunday." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Easter and the Ecclesiastical Calendar," Vol. 4, 1970, p. 616).

At last we have the truth: the main purpose for changing the Christian Holy Days with Roman Holy Days was to break any connection between them and their Jewish background. How many people know that originally Easter meant Passover and that it commemorated not the resurrection, but the crucifixion of Jesus Christ?

The impression the Roman ecclesiastical authorities wanted to convey was that the changes they instituted at the Council of Nicaea freed the Christian Church from its Jewish entanglements. What occurred in fact was the appearance of a new church - the Roman Church - which had no resemblance to the Churches of God established by the Apostles: not in beliefs, doctrines, practices, nor in Holy Days.

The Romans sought to differentiate between the Jewish and the Quartodeciman celebrations of the Passover as if they were different. In meaning they were different - the Christians no longer sacrificed lambs on that day - but in their date of observance they were not. They both celebrated it on the 14th day of the first lunar month. The name Quartodeciman comes from the Latin term for fourteen.

The Romans made the Passover the main target of their changes because that Holy Day represented the connection between the Christian Church and its Jewish background. Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself on that day, according to the Old Testament sacrificial laws. In the Old Testament, Passover signified the passing of Israel from slavery to freedom, while in the New Testament it signifies our passing from sin to holiness, from the bondage of Satan to the freedom of God, from death to life. Without the background of the Jewish Scriptures, not only does Jesus' sacrifice become meaningless, but His divinity is obliterated too. Now a few things from the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

"Regular Christian corporate worship on Sundays goes back to the apostolic age, but New Testament writings do not explain how the practice began. Jewish Christians probably kept the Sabbath at the synagogue, then joined their Gentile fellow believers for Christian worship after the close of the Sabbath at sundown, either in the evening or early Sunday morning."

Notice how the Romans justified changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. They acknowledged that the Scriptures did not "explain" worship on Sundays, that the "Jewish Christians probably kept the Sabbath at the synagogue." Not probably, but surely, for we have the writings of the Apostles which tell us that they did so. After the Jewish Christians were expelled from the synagogues, they continued to worship on the Sabbath and observe their "Jewish" Holy Days. When the Gentile Christians joined them, they also worshipped on the Sabbath and observed the Old Testament Holy Days.

The explanation that the Jewish Christians kept the Sabbath at the synagogue, then joined the Gentile Christians in their Sunday worship, would be laughable if it weren't for the fact that it tries to hide an apostasy of universal proportions.

"When the church became predominantly Gentile, Sunday remained as a customary day of worship."

It remained? How was it a customary day of worship before then? Who kept it as a day of worship before the Gentiles became predominant - the Jews? The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* writers and editors ought to have researched their facts better. This is nothing short of an apologetic work for the Catholic Church.

"Assemblies for the Eucharist were common on Saturday, however, as well as on Sunday in the Eastern churches into the 5th century, and Eastern canons forbade the practice, customary in the Roman Church, of fasting on the Sabbath.

The term Lord's Day, signifying the triumph of Christ in His resurrection and the beginning of a new creation, was in use by the end of the 1st century (Revelation 1:10; Didache 14; Ignatius of Antioch, Magnesians 9:1). Some writers referred to the Sabbath as the rest promised to the people of God at the end of time and to Sunday as "the eight day," or beginning of a new world (Hebrew 4:4-11; Letter of Barnabas 15)."

Sabbath was not the day of rest promised to the people of God at the end of time. It was a day of rest for the people of God from the beginning of time. What "some writers" thought is totally irrelevant and wrong, and that is proven by the fact that they counted Sunday as "the eighth day" in a week of seven days.

"In 321 the Roman emperor Constantine decreed Sunday to be a legal holiday and forbade all trade and work other than necessary agricultural labor. Later emperors extended the prohibition to include public amusements in the theatre and circus. Church councils of the period were more concerned to enforce the obligation of Sunday worship, the earliest being the Spanish Council of Elvira c. 300; but a synod of Laodicea (c.381) enjoined Christians not to "Judaize" but to work on Sabbath and rest, if possible on the Lord's Day.

Isn't that extraordinary? Not only was the day of worship changed from the Sabbath to Sunday, but also people had to prove that they did not "Judaize" by working on the Sabbath. A total onslaught on the people who wished to remain faithful to the Christian ideals and practices established by the Apostles.

"The Old Testament commandment of Sabbath rest received a spiritual interpretation [what interpretation?] from the Church Fathers when they applied it to Sunday; e.g., Augustine of Hippo held that the Sabbath rest from servile work meant abstention from sin (compare Tract. in Joannis, Book III, chapter 19; Book XX, chapter 2).

"A literal application of the Sabbath law to Sunday became evident in conciliar canons and civil laws of the Frankish kingdoms in the 6th century, climaxed by Charlemagne's capitulary adopted by the Council of Aachen, 789 (canon 80).

So, contrary to the initial assertion that "regular Christian corporate worship on Sundays goes back to the apostolic age," it now transpires that the change of worship from Sabbath to Sunday was an extraordinarily lengthy process lasting well into the sixth century. In fact, it lasted until our time, for the Romans never managed to completely obliterate from their dominions the Christians who continued to worship on the Sabbath and observe the same Holy Days as Jesus Christ and His Apostles did.

"Medieval legislation thereafter repeatedly sought to enforce the 'holiday' of Sunday, as also of many other holy days, for the benefit of serfs and labourers. Sabbatarian laws applied to Sunday were also continued by the Protestant Reformation."

The term "Sabbatarian" comes from the Sabbath - the seventh day of the week - and should never be applied to Sunday. Using it in this context is misleading and devious.

"The Acts of Uniformity of Edward VI in 1552 and Elizabeth I in 1559 required all persons to attend worship on Sunday, the later imposing a fine for neglect to do so. The Church of England's Canons of 1604 (number 13) make similar provision. Many Puritans were strongly Sabbatarian in sentiment. Some of them referred to Sunday as 'the Sabbath'."

So, first tell people to worship on Sunday, and then tell them to pretend it is the Sabbath. Puritan logic for you.

"In the Puritan colonies of New England, the so-called Blue Laws of Sunday observance were especially severe. Today some states and cities in the United States have statutes restricting certain trades and amusements on Sunday. Church laws continue to insist upon the moral obligation to attend worship every Lord's Day." (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th Ed., vol.16, History of the Church Year, p. 305).

Moral obligation comes from human beings; spiritual obligation comes from God. The American Puritans insist upon moral, not spiritual obligation. If they insisted on spiritual obligation, they would be forced to worship on the Sabbath, for that is the day which was sanctioned by God as a day of worship and rest.

Encyclopaedia Britannica makes some interesting comments also under the entry for Roman religion.

"Christianity, unique in its universal charity and unique also in its demand for a noble effort of faith in Jesus' blend of divinity and humanity, was the religion that prevailed in the Roman world."

Wrong! Christianity did not prevail, but rather, was prevailed upon by the Roman world. What ensued is a Christianity which is unrecognisable by the standards of the Apostles.

"It satisfied the emperor Constantine's impulsive need for divine support, and from AD 312 onward, by a complex and gradual process, it became the official religion of the empire.

For a time, coins and other monuments continued to link Christian doctrines with the worship of the Sun, to which Constantine had been addicted previously."

This then is the reason why the Romans changed the day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday - Emperor Constantine was "addicted" to worshipping his Sun god on that day. How many Christians know why they worship on Sunday?

"But even when this phase came to an end, Roman paganism continued to exert other, permanent influences, great and small."

Indeed, virtually all the Roman "great and small" pagan influences are found in the traditions of the Catholic Church today.

"The emperors passed on to the popes the title of chief priest, *pontifex maximus*"

Wrong again! The emperors acquired that title from the chief Roman priests in the first place. At the height of his power, Augustus usurped that title for himself and from him it passed on to all Roman emperors until close to the end of the empire.

For a while, the emperors eclipsed the Popes, but after the decline of the empire, the Popes became the undisputed leaders of the Western world. When the title "Pontifex Maximus" was handed back to them, the Popes accepted it without hesitation as their right.

The Popes continued to dominate the Roman religion and serve in the temple as chief priests surrounded by the Vestal Virgins throughout the empire in the same way that they now serve in the Vatican surrounded by the nuns. The organisation and hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church is virtually identical to that of the ancient Roman religion.

"The saints, with their distribution of functions, often seemed to perpetuate the many *numina* of ancient tradition. The ecclesiastical calendar retains numerous remnants of pre-Christian festivals - notably Christmas, which blends elements including both the feast of the Saturnalia and the birthday of Mithra."

Now this has to be the most astonishing admission of all. People celebrate Christmas not because it is the birth of Christ, but the birth of Mithra, His spiritual enemy. And what do the priests and ministers tell their followers? That it is the birth of Christ. How would you feel if your family and friends exchanged gifts and were being merry on the day your enemy was born, then said that they celebrated your birthday? Bear in mind that neither Jesus Christ nor His Apostles celebrated Jesus' birthday. The Bible does not sanction the celebration of birthdays.

"But, most of all, the mainstream of Western Christianity owed ancient Rome the firm discipline that gave it stability and shape, combining insistence on established forms with the possibility of recognising that novelties need not be excluded, since they were implicit from the start." (*New Encyc. Britannica*, 15th ed., Vol.18, Roman Religion).

Rome did not give Christianity "discipline...stability and shape." It gave it intolerance, deception, hatred, murder and lies. It killed the true Christians and forced underground those who escaped.

Now this is what *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* says about Easter:

"Controversy surrounded the determination of the date of Easter from the 2d to the 8th century... The Asiatic practice in the 2d century of observing Easter on the day of the Jewish Passover conflicted with the Roman custom of celebrating Easter on Sunday, the day of the Resurrection.

Occasionally, the Quartodecimans celebrated Easter on the day that other Christians were observing Good Friday. Originally both observances were allowed, but gradually it was felt incongruous that Christians should celebrate Easter on a Jewish feast, and unity in celebrating the principal Christian feast was called for. However, an attempt by Pope Victor I (189-198) to impose Roman usage proved unsuccessful in the face of a determined opposition led by Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus. Although Quartodecimanism waned in the 3d century, it survived in some Asiatic Churches as late as the 5th century."

Notice how the earliest attempt to force the change of Christian observance from Passover to Easter was made by a Pope. Why? Because "unity in celebrating the principal Christian feast was called for." Who called for it? We are not told, but it was the Romans not the Christians. If unity was called for, why did they not unite behind those who, from the beginning, have been observing the same Holy Days as the Apostles?

"The Council of Arles (314) hoped to achieve uniformity by observing Easter on the same day as the See of Rome, which was charged with announcing the date in advance through circular letters. A similar effort was made in the East at the Council of Nicaea (325). The exact wording of the Nicene decree is uncertain, but it apparently approved the practice of celebrating Easter on the Sunday after both the 14th of Nisan and the vernal equinox, thus implicitly rejecting both Quartodeciman and Jewish calendars" (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol.5, Easter Controversy, p.8).

The Romans never accepted the inalienable authority of the Scriptures. For them, tradition and the decrees of the Pope play a more important role. As they felt superior to their conquered peoples, they distanced themselves from their culture and religion. When Christianity proved irrepressible, they sought to accommodate it within their old religious practices and beliefs. They discarded everything "Jewish", and gave Christianity a new face. But the new Christianity retained few connections with the original church, except in name. Moreover, the new Christianity became the enemy of the true Churches of God and sought to eliminate them by every means. That is the "splendour" of the Catholic "truth"!

THE QUARTODECIMAN CONTROVERSY FLARES AGAIN

When the Quartodecimans were declared heretics they did not disappear from the empire, they simply went underground. Throughout the history of the Roman Empire, and later during the Catholic Holy Roman empires, these "heretics" surfaced again and again. Whenever they were asked to explain their position, they invoked the Bible as their authority. But showing the Bible to a Catholic priest during the Middle Ages was like putting a red flag in front of a bull. The conclusion was inevitable: the Bible had to go.

So the Catholic Church decreed that no one was to possess and read that book outside the church. For centuries, anyone found owning a Bible risked being declared a heretic. The church's explanation was that only its priests could interpret it. Untrained people, they said, were bound to come to erroneous conclusions which were damaging both to themselves and to the church.

This interdiction was easy to police as long as the Bible could be proliferated only by hand written manuscripts. But with the development of mechanised printing and mass media this became an impossible task. The Protestant Reformation and Counter-Reformation would not have been possible without these important technical developments.

After the original shock, the Catholic Church went on to prosper and expand again, even managing to bring back some of its lost sheep, as it happens these days with the disaffected Anglicans after the ordination of women. (One can argue that going from the Anglican to the Catholic Church is like jumping from the frying pan into the fire, but for many people belonging to a church is more important than following the Scriptures).

Earlier this century, the Catholic Church found itself on the defensive again when a new wave of fundamentalist churches revived the old Quartodeciman controversy with unexpected intensity and far reaching consequences. Unlike the Protestant Reformation, which only skimmed the surface of the Bible, the Churches of God sought to return to the fundamentals of the church before the Council of Nicaea corrupted them. But unlike in ancient times, when the Roman ecclesiastical authorities found it easier to eliminate the "heretics," nowadays they are forced to explain their actions by the standards of the Bible. That is difficult for them to do because, from the beginning, the Catholic Church placed more importance on tradition and the edicts of the Pope than on the Bible.

Most of the Catholic beliefs, doctrines and practices can be traced back to pagan times before the Roman Empire became Christian. Of the few which claim to be of Christian origin, most originated with the so-called "Church Fathers" who themselves can be shown to have been apostate believers. Even the title "Church Fathers" should warn people that something is not right, for Jesus Christ forbade His followers to call anyone on earth (spiritual) father (Matt.23:9).

When the Churches of God decided to raise the Quartodeciman issue again, they chose as their main target the Easter celebrations. They produced a number of booklets which purport to show that the resurrection did not occur on Sunday and the crucifixion not on Friday, and that Jesus Christ was in the grave EXACTLY three days and three nights, not half that time as traditional Christians believe.

The reasoning behind this strategy seems to be that by demolishing the idea of Sunday resurrection, the traditional "Good Friday-Easter Sunday" celebrations would collapse and people would return to observing the original Passover in its rightful time. In their calculations, however, the Churches of God overlooked one important development: the Catholics no longer use their old arguments to support Easter celebrations. By now a whole new theology has developed around this event.

At first, the Romans replaced the Passover with Easter in order to "synchronise" religious celebrations throughout the empire and changed the day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday to satisfy emperor Constantine's "addiction" to worshipping the Sun god. The resurrection was not mentioned as a reason for these changes at the Council of Nicaea for a good reason: the early Christians did not celebrate it. For them, the crucifixion was the important event because it was unique to Christ - He willingly took our sins and the penalty of death upon Himself - whereas the resurrection will soon become an event common to everyone.

Nowadays, Easter is associated with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and by trying to discredit it, the Churches of God are made to look as if they are un-Christian, impious, and irreverent towards Christ. They are victims once again of the revenge of the Catholic Church. But this does not seem to have deterred the Worldwide Church of God and its splinter churches. They continue to produce publications which show that by replacing Passover with Easter, and the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday, the Catholic Church distanced itself from Christ, therefore it has no right to call itself Christian.

In the booklet *"The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday,"* the Worldwide Church of God wrote:

"The doubting Pharisees were asking Jesus for a sign-supernatural evidence-in proof of His Messiahship.

Jesus answered: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS in the heart of the earth" (Matt.12:39-40) . . ."

"What is wrong with these plain, simple words of Jesus? How do these wise and prudent theologians know Jesus was crucified 'Good Friday' and rose 'Easter Sunday'? The simple answer is, they do not know it for it is not true! It is merely tradition, a tradition we have been taught from childhood and carelessly assumed! Jesus warns against 'making the word of God of none effect through your tradition' (Mark 7:13)..."

Notice Mark 8:31. 'And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the priests, and scribes, and be killed, and AFTER three days rise again.'

And if Jesus were in the grave only from Friday sunset to Sunday sunrise, then this text, too, must be torn out of your Bible or else you must reject the sign Jesus Christ gave! If he arose from the dead after three days, it might have been more than 72 hours, but it could not have been a second less.

Notice now Mark 9:31. '...They shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.' The duration expressed here must be between 48 and 72 hours. It could not be one second past 72 hours, and Jesus still rise from the dead the third day. And it could not be Friday sunset to Sunday sunrise, because that is only 36 hours, carrying us into the middle of the second day, after he was killed."

The authors of this diatribe fail to realise that their examples demolish the very arguments they try to prove. First, they quote Matthew 12:39-40, which says that Jesus will be in the grave THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS. Then, Mark 8:31 which says that Jesus will be killed and AFTER THREE DAYS RISE AGAIN.' And finally, Mark 9:31 which says that after Jesus is killed, He will be risen THE THIRD DAY.

From these examples they conclude that Jesus could not have risen one second earlier, nor one past, the 72 hours. The fact that the same author - Mark - used both expressions: "after three days rise again" and "he will be risen the third day," fails to register with them that the Bible allows a certain degree of flexibility in determining the length of time He spent in the grave.

If their arguments are right, it would mean that God sent His angels down to earth with precision stop watches and told them to stand by the tomb of Jesus Christ and make sure that the resurrection occurred not one hour, not one minute, not even ten seconds earlier or later, but exactly on the dot of 72 hours. With that kind of reasoning, is there any wonder that they find themselves in deep water with so many of their doctrines.

WHEN DID THE RESURRECTION OCCUR: SATURDAY OR SUNDAY?

There are four accounts of the resurrection in the Bible - one in each of the four Gospels. We will analyse them all, beginning with the Gospel of Matthew, to find out when the resurrection occurred and settle this question once and for all.

"Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.

His countenance was like lightening, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold I have told you.' So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and run to bring His disciples word." (Matt. 28:1-8).

The two women came to the tomb of Jesus Christ "after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn." The Jewish days begin at sunset and continue until the next evening. Some theologians have postulated that the two women came to the tomb early that day, meaning Saturday after the sun set, but the word "dawn" tells us that these events took place on the morning of the first day - the day we now call Sunday.

The fact that both the women and the guards were terrified tells us that these events occurred right then and there. If Jesus Christ had been resurrected the previous day afternoon, He must have come out of the tomb while it was still sealed.

If that were the case, what purpose did the earthquake and the rolling back of the stone the next morning serve, just to terrify the women and the guards? There is nothing in the Gospel of Matthew to remotely suggest that the resurrection might have occurred the previous day. The Gospel of Mark gives us the following account:

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away - for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go and tell His disciples - and Peter - that He is going before you in Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.'" (Mark 16:1-7).

No mention of an earthquake here, but all the other details are similar. An angel of the Lord - a young man - was waiting for the women inside the tomb and told them that Jesus was not there because He was risen. The words, "very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen" tell us that these events took place early the first day of the week. One cannot conclude from these words that the resurrection occurred the previous day. Therefore Mark confirms that the resurrection occurred early the first day of the week, not Saturday afternoon. Now let us go to the Gospel of Luke.

"Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'"

And they remembered His words. Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest." (Luke 24:1-9).

Unlike the other Gospel writers, Luke was a Gentile. He gathered his information from other sources after he converted to Christianity. He did his best to be as accurate as possible, nevertheless, the information he gathered from second hand sources was not as reliable as that found in the other Gospels. He has two angels instead of one and their message was slightly different. Nevertheless, these differences do not change the main thrust of the story: the stone was rolled away that morning, the tomb was empty, and the angels said that Jesus was not there because He was risen. When was He risen? As in the other Gospels, no exact time is given, but the description of events leaves no doubt that it occurred early that morning.

Now we come to the Gospel of John. In John we have as close a first witness account as we can get. Apostle John was at the scene of the resurrection within minutes after its fulfilment. He spoke with the women who witnessed the events early that morning and saw Jesus Christ personally later that day. Not surprisingly, He gives us additional vital information that establishes once and for all the time of the resurrection.

"On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.'

Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their homes. But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and 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.

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.' 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? 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.'

Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him, 'Rabboni!' (which is to say, 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.'

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her. Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'

Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Then Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.'" (John 20:1-21).

The earthquake described by Matthew, but not mentioned here, must have occurred before the women went and told the Apostles that Jesus' body was not in the tomb. They came back with the Apostles, and looked in the tomb again, then all returned home except Mary Magdalene. She remained at the tomb, weeping and wondering what had happened to Jesus' body. She looked again inside the tomb and, as she did, the angels told her that Jesus was no longer there because He was risen. Still dazed from weeping and from all these events, which she did not understand, she turned around and saw another person standing there. Now, notice carefully the discussion that followed, for it contains the key to understanding the time of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus asked her:

"'Woman, why are you weeping? 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.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' At that time her eyes were opened and recognising Jesus, exclaimed 'Teacher!'"

As she wanted to take hold of Him, Jesus said: "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father." How long did it take Jesus to ascend to the Father and return? Here is the answer:

"Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'

Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Then Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.'"

It took Jesus less than twelve hours to ascend to heaven, present Himself to the Father, and return to show Himself to the disciples. If He had been resurrected the previous day, why did He not go to heaven and return when He had enough time to do so? And if He was resurrected the previous day and did not go to heaven, where did He spend that night, in the garden around a campfire chatting with His angels?

After the trauma of the crucifixion, would the Father have resurrected Him and left Him in suspense until the next morning only to show Himself to Mary Magdalene and ask her to pass on a message to His Apostles? The angels could have delivered that message just as well. But a few extra hours in the tomb made no difference to Him; He was not aware of the passage of time. The conclusion is inevitable: not only do the Gospels not support the idea of a Saturday resurrection, they make it very clear that it occurred on Sunday morning. In this regard, traditional Christians are right and the Churches of God wrong.

Now let us find the truth about the crucifixion?

WHEN DID THE CRUCIFIXION OCCUR: WEDNESDAY OR FRIDAY?

As with the resurrection, we have four accounts of the crucifixion. Again, the slight differences between them are our guarantee that these are not contrived fabrications. The Gospel of Matthew gives us this account:

"Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, "The Lord has need of them," and immediately he will send them.' All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying: 'Tell the daughter of Zion, "Behold your King is coming to you, lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their garments on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: 'Hosanna to the Son of David! "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Hosanna in the highest!' And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, 'Who is this?' So the multitudes said, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.'

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" (Matt. 21:1-13).

The day on which Jesus made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem was not the Sabbath. People used the temple as a market place and, since we know that the Pharisees were very strict about observing the Sabbath, that could only have been a working day. In the evening, Jesus went to Bethany and lodged there overnight (21:17). The next day, He returned to Jerusalem and entered the temple. He then spent time preaching, debating with the Pharisees' (21:23), instructing His disciples and watching people place their gifts into the treasury (Mark 12:41-44). Obviously, that was a Sabbath day. Chapters 21 to 26 of Matthew describe Jesus' activities during the whole of that day. Now notice what He told His disciples that evening:

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, 'You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.'" (Matt. 26:1-2).

Since it was evening, we do not know whether He counted the two days from the Sabbath or from the first day of the week. But, in any case, that could only take us to Tuesday or Wednesday.

The Gospel of Mark gives us a few additional details about His entry into Jerusalem.

"And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Now the next day, when they had come from Bethany... they came to Jerusalem. And Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the sets of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple.

Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves."

And the scribes and the chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. And when evening had come, He went out of the city... Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes came to Him. And they said to Him, 'By what authority are You doing these things?'" (Mark 11:11-12, 15-19, 27-28).

Mark says that Jesus arrived in Jerusalem a day earlier, but because it was late He returned to Bethany for the night. This means that He came to Jerusalem on Thursday evening, returned to Bethany overnight, made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Friday, then drove the merchants out of the temple that day. Again, this makes it clear that His entry in Jerusalem was not on the Sabbath because the Jews were conducting commercial transactions in the temple precinct on that day.

Later that evening, Jesus once again returned to Bethany. He had a good relationship with the family of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead (See John 11). We could therefore assume that He lodged with them whenever He came to Jerusalem.

Saturday morning He went to Jerusalem, entered the temple and spent the day preaching, debating with the Pharisees and instructing His disciples. This does not tell us when He was crucified, but the Gospel of John once again gives us additional information which resolves the question of the time of the crucifixion, as it did with the resurrection:

"Then **six days before the Passover**, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had risen from the dead... The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' The King of Israel!

Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 'Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.'" (John 12:1, 12-15).

If Jesus came to Bethany **six days before the Passover**, and that day was a Thursday, counting six days from then takes us to Wednesday. That the crucifixion occurred on Wednesday is also confirmed by the prophet Daniel.

"And after the sixty two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself...Then He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering." (Dan.9:26a-27).

Jesus Christ was "cut off" (crucified) in the middle of the week and with that the Old Testament sacrificial offerings came to an end. There is yet further proof that the crucifixion occurred on Wednesday afternoon. The Worldwide Church of God published another booklet entitled *The Crucifixion Was Not on Friday*, which says that there were two Sabbaths during the time Jesus was in the grave.

"Jesus arose from the dead late Saturday afternoon-He was not at the sepulchre Sunday morning. Three days before Saturday afternoon would place the crucifixion on Wednesday, the preparation day for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Thursday of that year must have been an annual Sabbath, the first annual Sabbath in the Days of Unleavened Bread.

So that we would know that the Sabbath that followed the crucifixion was not necessarily the weekly Sabbath, John was inspired to call it a "high day" (John 19:31), which according to Jewish usage, means an annual Sabbath that may occur any day of the week." (pp.4-5).

Ignoring their ramblings about Saturday afternoon resurrection, the point they make about the "high day" Sabbath following the crucifixion is a valid one. It deserves further investigation.

In the Old Testament, in addition to the weekly Sabbath, all Holy Days are also called Sabbaths - annual Sabbaths. The Gospel of John identifies two Sabbaths during the time Jesus was in the tomb, one annual and one weekly:

"Therefore, because it was the Preparation day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. [By braking their legs, they would no longer be able to support their bodies, their muscles would collapse, and they would die quickly by suffocation].

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs [unlike the others, Jesus Christ suffered heavily during the previous night at the hands of the Roman soldiers; that's why He died before the two thieves].

...Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby." (John 19:31-33, 40-41).

The Sabbath mentioned here was a "high day" - an annual Sabbath. Now notice the weekly Sabbath:

"On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb." (John 20:1).

The first day of the week follows the weekly Sabbath. This makes two Sabbaths during the time Jesus was in the tomb. One immediately after the crucifixion, and another just before His resurrection. The question is, on what day of the week did the annual Sabbath fall? There are two possibilities: Friday or Thursday. In Mark 16:1 we read this:

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might anoint Him."

Comparing this passage with the following one from Luke, it becomes apparent that there was one working day between the two Sabbaths.

"That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared." (Luke 23:54-56; 24:1).

In one case, the women bought spices after the Sabbath, and in the other, they rested on the Sabbath. Then they came to the tomb in the first day of the week with the spices already prepared. By combining the accounts in the two Gospels, we get the following picture:

"That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and observed the tomb and how His body was laid." (Luke 23:54-55).

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might anoint Him." (Mark 16:1).

"Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared." (Luke 23:56; 24:1).

The working day between the two Sabbaths could only have been a Friday. That would make Thursday the annual Sabbath and Wednesday the day of the crucifixion.

The Gospels confirm that Jesus Christ was sacrificed in the middle of the week. In other words, in the year of His crucifixion the Passover fell on Wednesday, not Friday. This means that Jesus Christ was in the grave neither exactly three days and three nights as the Churches of God preach, nor half that time as traditional Christians believe. He was in the "heart of the earth" a little over three days and three nights.

THE PROBLEMS WITH THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Except for a few brief references, we omitted the Gospel of Luke from our analysis for a very important reason: this Gospel presents certain problems.

"On that very day [the Sabbath in which Jesus had the conflict with the Pharisees] some Pharisees came, saying to Him, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' 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, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.'" (Luke 13:31-33).

Here, Jesus made a play on words. In one place, He said, "I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected", and in the next, He said, "I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following". Obviously, He could not have journeyed and been "perfected" (crucified) on the same day.

He journeyed on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. On Tuesday evening, after He had His Passover meal with His disciples, He was arrested and tried before the Sanhedrin. Wednesday morning he was tried by Pontius Pilate, and in the afternoon He was crucified.

Was Jesus "perfected" after two or three days? His words seem to indicate that you can take it either way. He was arrested after two days, but was crucified after three.

According to the Old Testament, the day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread is the Preparation day. In the evening of that day, at twilight, the people of Israel sacrificed and ate the Passover lamb (Ex.12:1-11). But by the time of Jesus Christ, it is clear that the Jews were observing two Preparation days. This is not surprising, since this gave them an extra day to thoroughly cleanse their homes of leavened bread and prepare for the big Feast. Jesus Christ and His disciples confirmed this when they referred to both Tuesday and Wednesday as Preparation and Passover days. Now notice what the Gospel of Mark says:

"After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death..." (Mark 14:1).

Two days after the Sabbath is a Tuesday. But in Matthew 26:17 we read:

"Now on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, 'Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?'"

That evening Jesus had His Last Supper with His disciples. That was not the first proper day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread because the lamb was normally sacrificed the following evening. But Jesus had no choice but to "eat the Passover" with His disciples a day earlier because the next day He became the sacrificial lamb for the whole world. That is why He regarded both Tuesday and Wednesday as Passover days, and why He wants us to understand the need for certain flexibility in discussing those events.

He experienced the agony of sacrifice on both days. During the Last Supper, He broke bread and shared the cup of wine with His disciples and told them that they represented the breaking of His body and shedding of His blood. Later that evening, in the garden of Gethsemane, He said:

"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch. He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.'" (Mark 14:34).

Many people know that the expectation of an event can be as painful as the event itself. That certainly was the case with Jesus Christ that evening. Getting the mind to accept that He was going to die was a painful experience, particularly as He knew that He had done nothing to deserve it. Yet, He could not allow any feeling of bitterness or hatred towards those who tormented and crucified Him, for He taught His own followers to love their enemies. Therefore He could not allow Himself to fail in this very point. As He looked down from the cross at those who crucified Him, who were mocking and tormenting Him, He prayed: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34).

Clearly, a close analysis of the Gospels reveals that Jesus Christ was crucified Wednesday afternoon and rose from the grave Sunday morning. But certain sections in the Gospel of Luke appear to invalidate this conclusion.

In the afternoon of the first day of the week - Sunday afternoon - two of the disciples were travelling to a village called Emmaus, about eleven kilometres (seven miles) from Jerusalem. On their journey, they were talking about the things that happened in Jerusalem that weekend. As they were walking, Jesus approached them in disguise and spoke to them.

'And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, **today is the third day since these things happened.**"' (Luke 24:17-21).

When the expression, "the third day" is used in the Gospels, it describes a future event. Jesus Christ Himself did not differentiate between the expressions: "He will rise the third day" and "after three days rise again." Luke, however, uses the expression "today is the third day since these things happened" about twelve hours after the resurrection occurred and that takes it beyond the time scale used by the other Gospels. No matter how flexible, one cannot say that Sunday evening is the third day from Wednesday evening. Thursday evening is the first day, Friday the second day, Saturday the third, and Sunday evening is unmistakably the fourth day.

The other Gospel writers could say that they did not know the exact time the resurrection would occur - whenever they used the expressions, "the third day" or "after three days" it was always as a future event. Luke however, could not use that excuse because by Sunday night at least half a day had passed since the resurrection had occurred. Either he had difficulty understanding the Jewish reckoning of time or he had something else in mind.

This may come as a surprise to many, but Luke, alone of all the Gospel writers, shows no awareness of Wednesday crucifixion. Luke believed that the crucifixion occurred on Friday afternoon. That is why he said that Sunday evening was "the third day since these things happened".

Was he aware that he was halving the time Jesus was in the grave? He certainly was! That is why he gave us the examples of Jesus' flexibility in discussing His crucifixion. He was conditioning us to accept the notion of three days and three nights in the tomb as a mere figure of speech, not as a fact. Jesus Christ wanted us to be flexible in discussing His crucifixion and resurrection, but not that flexible.

Luke went further than that. He expressed the sign of Jesus' Messiahship in terms that would correspond with his beliefs. This becomes apparent when comparing his Gospel with that of Matthew:

"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

'The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.'" (Matt. 12:38-41).

Luke changed the sign of Jonah from being three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, to being a prophet to the Ninevites.

"And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, 'This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so

also the Son of Man will be to this generation... The men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here." (Luke 11:27-30,32).

Why is Luke's Gospel different from the others? The answer is simple. Luke knew nothing about the two Sabbaths during the time Jesus Christ was in the tomb. He knew that the crucifixion took place before the Sabbath and that His resurrection occurred after the Sabbath, but did not know that one was an annual Sabbath and the other a weekly Sabbath. He assumed that the crucifixion occurred on Friday afternoon and the resurrection Sunday morning. That reduced the time Jesus was in the tomb by half. Consequently, he did his best to steer us away from the sign of Jonah and the belief that Jesus was three days and three nights in the tomb.

As a Gentile, he was unfamiliar with the Jewish notion of the Sabbaths and their reckoning of time. This is what the producers of the New International Version of the Bible wrote as a foreword to his Gospel:

"The Gospel of Luke has been called the most beautiful book ever written [It may be beautifully written, but it is not the most accurate. The Gospel of John deserves that accolade]. Luke's writing shows him to be a highly educated man, one who wrote from a Greek background and viewpoint. He wrote especially with Gentiles in mind, for he explained Jewish customs and traced the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam."

He certainly wrote for the Gentiles, but what appears to have happened by the time he wrote his Gospel, is that the notion of 'Friday crucifixion - Sunday resurrection' was already beginning to be fixed in people's minds. Why? Because the church was thrown out of the synagogues, and was beginning to lose knowledge of its Jewish roots and customs.

In his Gospel, he related another event which is not found in any of the other Gospels. This also reflects a unique Gentile thinking.

"Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'" (Luke 23:39-43).

The belief of going to Paradise immediately after death was common in the Graeco-Roman world, but not in the Jewish world. Luke's writings form the basis of the two beliefs common to traditional Christianity today: 'Friday crucifixion - Sunday resurrection', and going to heaven or to hell immediately after death. (If you haven't read our article *Immortality of the soul and the Bible* in which this topic is discussed at length, send for your free copy).

Does this mean that Luke's Gospel is not inspired and should be abandoned? Certainly not! It just means that people must make the effort to discover the whole truth and understand the reasons and motivations of each of the Gospel writers.

Even so, many people might ask, why did God allow Luke to make mistakes in such important matters? For just one reason: God gave His enemies a rope by which they could hang themselves.

We have shown conclusively, that the truth of God can be discovered independently by those who seek it, without the help of scholars, theologians or ecclesiastical authorities. But it does require consistent prayer, worship, meditation and Bible study. Those who think that they can "just give their heart to the Lord" a-la Billy Graham type crusade, then go to heaven when they die have a surprise coming their way.

God is testing every one of us to see if we have the determination, patience, character and humility to be entrusted with eternal life in His Kingdom. Jesus Christ warned that the road to salvation is not an easy one:

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matt.7:13-14).

Those who persevere find the way, but those who turn back when the going gets tough are not given to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

"And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

"Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

"And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.'" (Matt 13:10-17).

The disciples remained faithful to Jesus through all His trials (Luke 22:28), but others stumbled at His preaching and abandoned Him (John 6:60-66). That is why their understanding was taken away from them.

God says that the Bible has been written in such a way as to force people to make the effort to discover the truth:

"Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line. Here a little, there a little... That they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught" (Is. 28:9-10,13a).

In another place the Scriptures say:

"It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter." (Pr.25:2).

Who are the kings whom God expects to cover themselves in glory by discovering His secrets? Those of Britain, Arabia, Spain, Norway, or Ruritania? If they have not been able to discover the simplest things in the Scriptures, such as the words of blessings for their people, how would they ever discover the hidden things of the Kingdom of God? We have never heard Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II finish her address to her people with a blessing.

In case she decides to change her mind, and to save her time searching the Bible (after all one does not expect the head of the Anglican Church to know everything), this is where the blessings of God can be found:

"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: 'The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you;' 'The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.'" "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and will bless them." (Nu. 6:22-27).

Similar blessings can be found in the New Testament. Every epistle begins and/or ends with a blessing.

If the kings of this world are not in a position to discover the truth of God, then who are the kings whom God expects to cover themselves in glory by discovering His hidden things? Those who are being prepared to rule the world under Christ when His Kingdom will be established. (Rev.1:6; 5:10).

At present, they neither wear crowns nor are dressed in royal apparel. Rather, they are despised, poor, miserable, and "clothed in sackcloth". Nevertheless they know the truth of God and 'the Way' to His Kingdom and if you want to be part of that Kingdom, you would be wise to seek God's truth from their lips.

THE CHRISTIAN HOLY DAYS

If Jesus Christ was not born at Christmas and was not crucified on Friday, and the early church did not celebrate His resurrection, what are the correct Christians Holy Days?

Whenever questions of doctrine or Christian way of life arise, the answer must always be sought in the Bible.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2Ti.3:16).

The Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Pentecostals and the Churches of God find themselves in a quandary over the question of Holy Days because they have not used the Scriptures for "reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness". Every Christian denomination has its own excuses about to why it has not followed the Scriptures and observed the Holy Days sanctioned by Jesus Christ and His Apostles. In some cases, there is disagreement within the same denomination over the right Holy Days and the date of their observance. For example, the Armenian Apostolic Church observes Christmas on December 6th, the Greek and Romanian Orthodox Churches on December 25, and the Slavic Orthodox Churches on January 7th. They worship a Lord who was supposed to have been born on three different dates.

There is similar disagreement about Easter. This year, the Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal Churches celebrated it on April 3rd, the Orthodox Churches on May 1st, while the Churches of God observed neither Jesus' birthday nor His resurrection. They celebrated instead the "Jewish" Holy Days. But this has not made them any more holy, for there is an intense argument between them too over the manner and time of their observance.

If Christians cannot find common ground on these simple matters, how are they ever going to agree on the weightier matters of the law and doctrine? The differences between them are so great it is hard to understand how they can all claim to serve the same God and Lord.

The causes of these disputes come from the fact that all churches have paid only lip service to the teachings of the Bible. With the Churches of God, the problem is aggravated by their failure to understand the differences between the Old and New Testaments. While traditional Christians have mistakenly ignored the Old Testament altogether, the Churches of God have placed more emphasis on it than on the New Testament. Both attitudes are wrong and contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. While they all quoted extensively from the Old Testament, they also made it clear that it is the New Testament that matters now. The Apostles specifically told their followers to follow their example, therefore we must find out from them the correct Holy Days and their time and manner of observance.

"Now all these things happened to them [the people of ancient Israel] as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come." (1 Cor. 10:11).

"But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you." (2Th.3:6-7).

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

Let us begin with the Passover, the Holy Day that has aroused the greatest controversy. This is what Apostle John wrote: "Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near" (John 6:4). Passover a feast of the Jews? Did he make a mistake? No, because he repeated that statement two more times: "Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand" (John 2:13), and, "And the Passover of the Jews was near" (John 11:55).

John was the closest Apostle to Jesus Christ and the one whom Jesus loved the most (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7). We should, therefore, be in no doubt that what he wrote was inspired by the Holy Spirit and in accordance with the will of Jesus Christ. When he says that Passover is a Holy Day of the Jews, the argument stops there.

Now what did he have to say about the Feast of Tabernacles, the other great Old Testament Holy Day? "Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand" (John 7:2). The Feast of Tabernacles is also a "feast of the Jews."

And the Sabbath, the day of rest and worship for many Christian denominations - the Adventist and the Churches of God among them - is that a "feast of the Jews" too? "After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem... And that day was the Sabbath." (John 5:9).

No mistake about it: the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Sabbaths, are all "feasts of the Jews." Since the Days of Unleavened Bread and the Pentecost are connected with the Passover, and the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement are precursors to the Feast of Tabernacles, they must also be regarded as "feasts of the Jews."

The Apostles said that you should never listen to anyone who is preaching a different gospel:

"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal.1:8-9).

What did Apostle Paul mean that angels from heaven could preach a false gospel? Being from heaven is no guarantee that it is a true gospel. The question is, how do angels preach to us? The answer is, they preach through human beings. There are many people who think that angels have spoken to them or that they have a message from heaven, and they may well be right. What they do not know is that their message is not necessarily true, but coming from lying spirits (1Kings 22:22).

Think of David Koresh, the mad leader of the Branch Davidian cult from Waco, Texas, who took a few dozen people with him to an infernal death. Or Charles Manson from California who led a band of hippies in the late 1960's in an orgy of murders. They both believed that they had messages from heaven.

Texas and California, two well-known destinations for deceiving angels. Jim Jones came from California too, and so do a lot of other familiar names.

Jesus Christ said that before His return many will come in His name, preaching Him, yet deceiving many (Matt.24:23-24). How do people preach Christ yet deceive those to whom they preach? By mixing truth with falsehood. When Satan deceived Adam and Eve, he did not come out directly against God's teaching. He began by planting doubt in their minds: "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" When Eve confirmed that God has indeed said that, Satan replied, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen.3:1-5).

Similarly, you will find many priests, ministers and preachers telling their followers that the Scriptures do not really mean what they say - they need interpretation. Naturally, they are the ones to interpret the Scriptures. Apostle Peter said:

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction" (2Peter 2:1).

How do the false prophets deny the Lord who "bought them"? By denying that He exists, that He has a body or an image, or by causing their followers to pray to intermediaries such as a "saint", the "mother of Jesus", angels, etc. - all of which are contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Apostle John warned his followers not to believe everything they hear:

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1John 4:1).

How do you know a true prophet from a false one, a minister of Christ from one of Satan? By comparing what they preach with what is in the Bible. Be careful though not to pick on inadvertent mistakes and confuse these with false preaching. Remember, the Jews accused Jesus Christ of blasphemy because they did not understand His message. Why did they not understand it? Because they did not know the Scriptures.

Many prophets and Apostles made mistakes too. Some lost their lives because their message was thought to be a false one. We made an error at the beginning of our work, and our enemies never let us forget it. Those who should have known better picked on that error and blinded themselves to everything else we said since.

God allowed all His servants to commit errors in order to teach them a lesson in humility. Never assume that you are above reproach, never think that you know everything and never underestimate your enemies. The irony, in our case, is that what at first appeared to be an error, turned out to be true in the end. In 1990, before the outbreak of the Gulf War, we predicted that conditions must be created in Israel for a visit by the Pope. That was before there was any talk in the media about such a visit. We thought that the United Nations troops would play a role in creating those conditions, but, as it turned out, the Israeli people themselves are doing it. And yet, as this issue is going to press, there is talk that a contingent of the United Nations forces will be deployed to keep peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

The difference between a true and a false prophet is that the servants of God see their errors and repent of them, whereas Satan's servants sink deeper into the mire even after their sins have been exposed.

When people become obsessed over something, they find it hard to change even when they are shown to be in error. A good example is the Holy Days. Few people seem to be concerned that Christian denominations observe different Holy Days on different days and dates. The matter is serious because it leads people to unwarily worship demons.

"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that bread.

Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons" (1Cor.10:14-21).

Aside from his warning about falling into the trap of unknowingly worshipping demons, Apostle Paul introduced two new elements into the discussion about the Holy Days. He spoke of "Israel after the flesh," implying that there is some other Israel, and of the bread which we partake as part of the communion with Christ and the cup which we drink at the Lord's table. The question about Israel will be discussed later, but the point about the communion with Christ can only refer to the Passover. Was Apostle Paul telling his followers to observe this "feast of the Jews"? Indeed, this is what he told the Corinthian church:

"Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1Cor.5:6-8).

There can be no mistake that Apostle Paul told the churches he established to observe the Passover feast. However, there is a host of difference between the way the Christians and the "Israel after the flesh" observe it. This is what Jesus Christ told His disciples during the Last Supper:

"And when the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes.'

"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; **do this in remembrance of Me.**'" Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is **the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.**'" (Luke 22:14-20).

This passage proves that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was connected with the Passover. His followers were to observe this Holy Day not with traditional Jewish sacrifices, but by breaking bread and drinking wine - symbols which represent the breaking of Jesus' body and the shedding of His blood. Without this memorial service, our salvation would be in doubt because it is by this that we show our acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins.

How are we to know when this Holy Day is to be celebrated? We know it from the Jews. It may surprise some Christians, but even under the New Testament the Jews are entrusted with keeping God's "oracles". (Rom.3:2).

What about the other "feasts of the Jews," are they to be observed by the Christians? This revolves around the question of who is a Jew.

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in letter; whose praise is not from men but from God." (Rom.2:28-29).

"But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called'. That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of promise are counted as seed." (Rom:9:6-8).

"Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.'" So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.'

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal.3:7-9, 26-27, 29).

Under the New Testament, those who are born of the flesh are not Jews, but those who are born of faith are. Jesus Christ never called His followers Christians; He called them Jews. In His message to the Church of Smyrna He said:

"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."

And to the Church of Philadelphia, He said:

"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie - indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you." (Rev.2:9; 3:8-9).

Therefore, if you are a Jew - a spiritual Jew - you must observe the "feasts of the Jews." If you are not a Jew, you can observe the Catholic, the Hindu, the Islamic or any feast you wish - it no longer makes any difference what feasts you keep. You may even decide to create your own feasts. You can make your birthday the main feast, and the birthdays of your wife and children minor feasts. And if this is not enough, you can honour your neighbours with feasts on their birthdays. They may well think you are mad, but don't let that deter you. Think of your grandchildren and the pride with which they would celebrate these feasts. When asked why they celebrate them, they will answer that they are celebrating the feasts established by their great,

great, grandfather. Little would they know that these feasts have nothing to do with their grandfather being great and more with being drank, but what people don't know it does not hurt them, does it?

"Wait a minute", you may say, "you can't just set up feasts on your birthdays like that?"

"Well, why not? The Catholics did it and got away with it!"

"But the Catholics celebrate Jesus' birthday, not just any birthday!"

"Herein lies the problem. What the Catholics celebrate has nothing to do with Jesus' birthday, as we have, hopefully, amply proven in the previous article."

What we need to find out now, is what the Apostles celebrated in their time, and what Holy Days will be observed during the coming Millennial Kingdom? As usual, we shall seek the answer in the Bible.

We have established that both Jesus Christ and the Apostles sanctioned the Passover. Apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians for celebrating this feast in an unworthy manner. They were told to celebrate it "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," things which were never mentioned in connection with the Old Testament celebrations. We must do this with a pure heart and a clear conscience, otherwise we profane this most holy of feasts and this is an unpardonable sin.

The Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal Churches have developed a new theology about the Passover celebrations and used it as justification for changing its date and day of observance. They say that since Jesus Christ was risen on Sunday, and the New Testament speaks of the Lord's Day (Rev.1:10), and of another day of rest for the people of God (Heb.4:1-10), it means that Christians should now observe Easter and keep Sunday as a day of rest instead of Saturday.

What is lost in this debate is what these celebrations represent. When Easter replaced Passover, the resurrection became the main focus of Christian celebrations rather than the crucifixion. Ask any of the more than a billion traditional Christians what they celebrate at Easter and few, if any, will tell you that it is the crucifixion. Passover cannot be celebrated on Sundays or on Friday nights, but on the day on which the Jews celebrate it, and in the manner Jesus and the Apostles commanded.

Which are the other Holy Days Christians must observe then?

Apostle John declared all Old Testament Holy Days to be "feasts of the Jews." He also mentioned the Feast of Dedication, a Holy Day that is not found in the Old Testament. "Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter" (John 10:22). What is unusual about this feast is that, unlike the others, he does not say that this is a "feast of the Jews."

Why do the Jews celebrate it then? This should be obvious. Those who celebrate it are not Jews. We cannot overemphasise the fact that from the New Testament's point of view, those who are born of the flesh are not Jews, but those who are born of the spirit are. This very omission is telling us the difference between the Jews according to the flesh and those according to the spirit.

There is a book entitled, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar - twentieth to twenty second century*, by Arthur Spiel (Fieldheim Publishers, Jerusalem/New York, 1986), a brilliant work of scholarship, which presents a comparative Roman and Jewish calendar with all the information needed about the Jewish Holy Days and their date of observance. In this book, you will find twice as many Holy Days as there are in the Old Testament. That is because the Jews have added memorable historical events to God's Holy Days. There is nothing wrong with that, it is not a sin for them to do so, but we are under no obligation to observe these added Holy Days. We only need to observe the original Holy Days given by God to Moses.

"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord that sanctifies you.

You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you... It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'" (Ex.31:12-14a,17).

Did the Apostles observe the Sabbath as a day of worship? They certainly did it! (Acts 13:14,42,44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4). Does Jesus Christ expect to find His followers observing it as a day of rest and worship when He returns?

"Therefore when you see the '*abomination of desolation*,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand) then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains... And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath." (Matt.24:15-16, 20).

The reason their flight should not be in winter is because it is cold, and not on the Sabbath because that is a Holy Day and they are not allowed to carry heavy burdens on this day.

Other Holy Days given by God to Moses are the Feasts of Unleavened Bread and the Pentecost:

"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath [the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is a "High Day" or annual Sabbath], from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord." (Lev.23:15-16).

We already saw that the Apostles kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread in conjunction with the Passover. Regarding Pentecost, it is on this Holy Day that they received the Holy Spirit.

"Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4).

What would have happened if instead of celebrating this feast, the Apostles were doing their own work? They would not have received the Holy Spirit. After that event, the Holy Spirit arrived whenever people repented, prayed, worshipped God and were baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Continued God to Moses:

"Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year; You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labours which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering, which is at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labours from the field.

Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God." (Ex.23:14-17).

A question that arises from the writings of Apostle Paul, is whether Christians need to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread by eating unleavened bread during the seven days of this feast. Remember, Apostle Paul said that we should "keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1Cor.5:8).

While it is true that this feast has a different meaning for Christians than it has for the Jews, we cannot observe it by eating leavened bread because then it would become the "feast of leavened bread." We do not need to follow Jewish customs slavishly; both Jesus Christ and the Apostles told us to use judgement and common sense in deciding such matters. If you cannot decide for yourself, follow those whom you think are inspired by the Holy Spirit. You will not sin if you follow wrong advice, but you will be held accountable if your spiritual growth remains static. You are expected to persevere in the study of the Bible until you discover the whole truth and are at peace with yourself and with God on all biblical matters.

The Feast of Harvest mentioned above is the Feast of Pentecost. No need to bring the firstfruits of your labours before God. Spiritually speaking, we are God's firstfruits, that is why we must come before God with a pure heart to offer prayer, worship, praise and honour on this day. The Feast of Ingathering is also called the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast is not mentioned as having been observed by the churches in the New Testament, but the prophet Zechariah connected it with the Millennial Kingdom:

"And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles." (Zech.14:16).

Zechariah was describing the era just ahead of us. During that time, Jesus Christ will rule the earth, together with the people whom He will resurrect at His return (Rev.5:10; 20:4-6). The implication of this passage is that not many people will survive the great tribulation, if all are expected to attend this feast in Jerusalem once a year. Towards the end of the Millennium, when the people will multiply upon the earth again, people will observe this feast wherever the churches will decide, and that may not necessarily be Jerusalem.

The Feasts of Trumpets and of Atonement, precursors to the Feast of Tabernacles, must also be observed with holy convocations. In addition, we are required to keep the Feast of Atonement by fasting.

These then are the "feasts of the Jews" which those who are Jews ought to observe. However, we have not fully discussed how and when the Passover should be observed. There is confusion among the Churches of God about this Holy Day. They argue over the question of whether it should be observed on the evening of the 14th of Nisan - the first lunar month - when Jesus Christ had the Last Supper with His disciples, or on the afternoon of that day when He was crucified. This is resolved by answering the question: Do we commemorate the Last Supper or His sacrifice?

Jesus Christ told His disciples when He broke the bread, "This is My body which is being broken for you. This do in remembrance of Me". What did He ask us to commemorate - His Last Supper or the breaking of His body? Clearly, He wants us to remember the unique sacrifice He performed on our behalf. Therefore, we should commemorate the Passover on the afternoon of Nisan 14.

Apostle Paul confirmed this: "when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper" (1Cor.11:20). If we do not come together to eat the Lord's Supper, then what do we come together for? To commemorate Jesus' death. How do we commemorate it? Here is Apostle Paul again:

"For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you. For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take it; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.'" (1Cor. 11:21-26).

Read this passage again and take note in particular of the last verse. What do we proclaim when we partake of the Passover bread and wine? The Lord's death, not His Last Supper! There should be a supper during which the people may symbolically break bread, sip a little wine and have something light to eat. A sermonette emphasising the importance of the occasion should be delivered or just plain reading of the Scriptures. Some appropriate hymns should also be sung. The focus on this solemn occasion must be on Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, not on anyone's ability to deliver a moving sermon.

A curious custom has developed within many denominations about this Feast. When I was a member of the Worldwide Church of God in the early 1970's, we used to stop in the middle of this service and wash each other's feet. The ministers told us that this was an example given by Jesus Christ, which we needed to enact faithfully.

A few years later, a television program broadcast from Rome showed the Pope pouring water on the feet of twelve seminarians, wiping and kissing them. When this Pope does things, he does them in style. We all know that He is keen on kissing. He kisses children, airport tarmacs, his disciples' feet, but he does not kiss the world leaders; they kiss his "blessed" ring instead.

Is this what Jesus Christ meant by His example? That people should wash each other's feet in the middle of the Passover memorial service, when there is no need for such washing? Take note of this conversation between Him and Apostle Peter:

"Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, 'Lord, are you washing my feet?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.'

Peter said to Him, 'You shall never wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.'

Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.'" (John 13:6-10).

Would anyone dare to attend this solemn occasion with dirty feet, knowing that someone else is going to wash them? Since Jesus said that those who are clean do not need to be washed, this exercise becomes a farce. When then are we to wash each other's feet? In our daily lives, whenever it is necessary.

In talking about the widows who were to be considered for church help, Apostle Paul wrote:

"Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works; if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work." (1Ti.5:9-10).

We live in a world in which such customs seem strange. In our modern society, with all the amenities at our disposal, we have forgotten that for the whole of history people have been washing each other's feet, relieving the afflicted and helping strangers. I was fortunate enough to have grown up in a society in which such virtues were still practised until the communists "modernised" everything.

We used to live in an area which was half way between a high mountainous plateau on the one side and a city on the other. Many people, friends of the family and strangers, would make an overnight stop at our place before continuing early the next morning to the city. The stopover was essential particularly during cold and rainy weather.

I do not recall my mother and grandmother washing their feet, but I do know that they heated water for them to wash themselves and were offered something to eat and drink.

My parents received similar treatment when they travelled their way. It was a well-established social custom.

We can learn from these simple people how to obey Jesus' command of washing each other's feet. This is what He meant by His example, not that we engage in a useless exercise in the middle of the Passover service.

Jesus Christ and the Apostles have not only told us how and when to observe the correct Holy Days, but also which holy days we must not observe. In the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ made the following remark to the Churches of God in Ephesus and Pergamos:

"But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

"Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate." (Rev 2:6,15).

Who are the Nicolaitans and what doctrine do they hold that Jesus Christ hates? The word "Nicolaitans" comes from Nicolas: St Nicolas, Santa Claus, Christmas. Jesus Christ hates the celebrations associated with Christmas because they are a farce! He was not born at Christmas, and this holy day is not sanctioned in the Bible.

What about Easter - is there anything wrong with celebrating Jesus' resurrection? Aside from the fact that, like Christmas, Easter is not sanctioned in the Bible, there is nothing wrong with celebrating Jesus' resurrection. But you cannot celebrate it at Easter because from the beginning this has been associated with the sun-god and fertility symbols which have nothing to do with Jesus Christ.

If you want to celebrate Jesus resurrection, you count three and a half days from the Passover memorial service and celebrate it. Why three and a half instead of three days? Because that is how long Jesus was in the grave.

Revelation 11:9 tells us that the bodies of the two witnesses of God will lie dead for three and a half days. There is no other reason why this length of time should be mentioned except to connect it with the death of Jesus Christ. The two lengths of time put together make exactly one week - a significant biblical mark.

If you decide to celebrate Jesus' resurrection, you cannot do it like the Nicolaitans. You can celebrate it with a nice feast, joyous hymns and readings from the Bible, but none of the paraphernalia associated with nature regeneration or worship of the sun.

Enjoy your feasts!

THE BEASTS OF REVELATION

"Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7).

On December 25, 1991, the Soviet Union was signed out of existence by its leader Michail Gorbachov. Boris Yeltsin became the tsar of the new Commonwealth of Independent States formed from eleven of the fifteen republics which made up the former Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviet Empire was precipitated by its failure to deliver the much-heralded egalitarian classless communist utopia, and by the astonishing economic and social backwardness in which it kept its subject peoples.

The world media spoke excitingly about the end of the Cold War, the end of superpower rivalry and the beginning of a new era of "peace, prosperity and happiness." Less than three years later, the world is beginning to realise that the Soviet Empire did no so much collapse as transform, that the ideological drive which motivated the former Soviet Union has been replaced by nationalistic fervour and old Russian imperial ambitions. The sound of sabre rattling is being heard once again from young Russian generals and politicians who find it hard to cope with the humiliating dismantling of the Soviet Empire without a bullet being fired.

In our No 2, (1992), edition, we revealed that the ten-headed beast-power of the end time, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, will rise out of the territories of the former Soviet Union. That prediction was so contrary to what the Churches of God have been preaching, that Garner Ted Armstrong - one of their long time serving prophets and leader - felt the need to go on the offensive. In a series of articles in his church newspaper, he boasted of how his father and himself have been predicting, since the end of the Second World War, that the end time "beast" will be formed by a group of ten nations led by Germany, and that there will never be a war between the USA and Russia because "no prophecy speaks about such a war."

His understanding of biblical prophecies is no-where better illustrated than in his article, "The Missing Key to the Book of Revelation" (*The International News*, June, 1991). Here is a quote:

"Therefore, Revelation 1:10 is one of the most vital keys to our understanding of the book, for it tells us how John was projected forward in time, as if in the proverbial "time warp" of science fiction, to see and hear many of the mind-boggling events to take place in the end time."

What does Revelation 1:10 say that makes it such a "vital key"?

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet."

This, according to G.T. Armstrong, is "one of the most vital keys" to the book of Revelation. We would like to have known what the other "vital keys" are, but he kept these to himself.

The late Herbert W. Armstrong, father of G.T. Armstrong and former leader and "apostle" of the Worldwide Church of God, also "unveiled" the book of Revelation. He wrote the booklet, "The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last" which is now being distributed by the Worldwide Church of God in an edited version under the title, "Inside the Book of Revelation." We would like to

hear from anyone who has managed to unlock a single prophecy as a result of reading the writings of the two Armstrongs. They restate what is in the book of Revelation without any attempt to unveil what its symbols represent.

There is no such a thing as a key to the book of Revelation. No magic wand, no secret formula, by which one may unlock any of its mysteries and prophecies. Such a talk is more akin to occultism than to Christianity. The only way one may understand this book, or any other book of the Bible, is by hard work, study, meditation, prayer, and worship.

The Bible talks about the "key of the house of David" (Isa.22:22), the "key of David" (Rev.3:7), the "key of knowledge" (Lu.11:52), the "key of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.16:19), the "key of hell and death" (Rev.1:18), and the "key of the bottomless pit" (Rev.9:1). Except for the last, but indirectly that one too, all the others are connected with Jesus Christ.

Now, what did Jesus Christ have that gave Him the key to all these things? The HOLY SPIRIT! This is the "key to the Kingdom of God", the "key of knowledge", the "key of the house of David", and the "key of hell and death"! This is the key that gives one understanding to the mysteries and prophecies of the Bible! This is also the key Jesus Christ promised to those who follow Him and keep His commandments.

"If you love Me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:15-17).

"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Lu.24:49).

"Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4).

This is the key that Jesus Christ received from the Father, which He gave to His servants in ancient times and which He still gives to those who follow Him now. If you have the Holy Spirit, you have the key to the knowledge of God. This is how you get that knowledge:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

"By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honour and life." (Prov.1:7; 9:10; 22:4).

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever." (Ps.111:10).

"And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.'" (Job 28:28).

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil." (Eccl.12:13-14).

How many preachers have you heard telling their listeners to fear God? If not, how many have you heard telling them to fear Satan? One of the publications of the Worldwide Church of God used to say that Satan was hidden in our home ready to devour us. Enough to make one terrified to go home. Now compare this with what Jesus Christ said:

"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt.10:28).

Who is "Him" whom peoples should fear? God, not Satan! But if you are a member of the Churches of God, you do not need to fear God - He cannot destroy your soul because you have no soul. They tell their followers that they have no soul, that their bodies are their "living souls". On the other hand, if you are a member of the traditional churches (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostals), God cannot destroy your soul because you have an "immortal" soul. That is why the emphasis in all these churches is on fearing Satan not God. They have elevated Satan to equality with God.

The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ overcame Satan, and that now he is but an instrument in God's hands. At the end of this world, Satan will be destroyed in a great lake of fire together with his demons and all sinful human beings.

Jesus Christ said that by their fruits you shall know the true shepherds from the false ones (Matt.7:20). Their fruits include their preaching. In his article about the "vital key" to the book of Revelation, Garner Ted Armstrong wrote:

"A carnal, prideful of ego and vanity which wants its own way is like a barrier to understanding, like blinders to the eye, like plugs to the ear. God will not authorise would-be seers whose secret agendas include covetousness for money, prestige, "recognition"; a following of believers. God's true ministry is not open to carnal-minded opportunists. When one is not repentant toward God, but possessed of the self-assuredness of vanity and covetousness, he may as well be deaf and blind, so far as reading and understanding God's Word is concerned.

... Those who would attempt to exaggerate or minimise the book of Revelation would receive of the horrifying plagues described within its pages. Those who try to exploit people by pretending to understand the book of Revelation-false prophets who make various predictions which are of their own imagination concerning "Armageddon" and the like-are under a Divinely - pronounced curse."

This gives a good idea of what they preach in his church. "God will not authorise would-be seers..." Does God give out licenses to "authorise" people to preach?

The Pharisees also felt that Jesus Christ was not "authorised" to preach because He was not a graduate of their religious colleges. They asked Him: "By what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?" (Luke 20:2). By that standard, obviously Garner Ted Armstrong would not think that Jesus Christ is authorised to preach either if He were in the world today.

To God, it makes no difference whether people are graduates of one college or another. When He wants people to preach His Gospel, He takes them from wherever they are and whatever they do, and instructs them through His Holy Spirit. Amos was a herdsman when God made him a prophet (Am.1:1). David was a shepherd when God made him king over Israel (1 Sa.16:11-13). John the Baptist "grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts [from childhood] till the day of his manifestation to

Israel" (Luke 1:80). Jesus Christ worked as a carpenter until He began His ministry (Mark 6:3). The "authority" God's servants have received from God, which empowered them to preach, is the Holy Spirit.

Garner Ted Armstrong would not know about this because in his church, as in all Churches of God, they preach that the Holy Spirit is an inanimate object. Any wonder that God has abandoned these dreamers to their own devices. How would you feel if people said that you are a lifeless object, would you respond to their prayer and help them in times of need?

Jesus Christ elevated the Holy Spirit to equality with Him and the Father:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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." (Matt.28:19-20).

Elsewhere He said:

"Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 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." (Matt.12:31-32).

One cannot commit blasphemy against inanimate objects. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is blasphemy against the Father, for the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father just like Jesus Christ did:

"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father." (John 15:26; 16:28).

The Holy Spirit and the Father are one just as Jesus Christ and the Father are one (John 10:30; 17:11,21-24). But the hypocrites in the Churches of God have failed to understand this relationship, just as they have failed to understand most biblical doctrines and teachings. Anyone who believes what they preach can have no other fate than their own, and it does not take a genius to know what that will be.

G.T. Armstrong said: "God's true ministry is not open to carnal-minded opportunists . . . whose secret agendas include covetousness for money." We could not agree more.

Who are these covetous carnal-minded opportunists? I was robbed of all my possessions and put in the street when I told his ministers that tithing is not a law under the New Testament. Has he forgotten also who was expelled from the church for carnal-minded sins?

Like the Apostles of Jesus Christ, we preach the Gospel of God freely. The Churches of God, on the other hand, shower you with "free" literature at first, then when you become a member of their church they methodically and mercilessly ruin you with false tithing doctrines and demands for offerings.

"Covetous carnal-minded opportunists with secret agendas?" Who has congregational meetings in secret and isolate their members from society and from "unconverted" friends and family?

Jesus Christ sent His followers into the world to be a light:

"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 lampstand, 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." (Matt.5:14-16).

"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. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

"As You have sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth." (John 17:14-19).

The leaders of the Churches of God have taken the followers of Christ out of the world, brainwashed them and jealously kept guard over them. Not only are they not a light to the world, they are a bad example. Try to have a decent objective conversation with any of them, if you can discover their hiding burrows, and you will see what we mean.

Those who do not know the difference between what they teach in the present day Churches of God and what the Apostles taught, should read last year's edition of *The Christian Herald*, particularly the article on "Tithing and the New Testament." It is worth repeating here how we concluded that edition.

"Jesus Christ spoke in general terms about the signs leading to that event [His return], and we advise you to read the 24th chapter of the book of Matthew for that. The only sure sign He gave as indicating the imminence of those events, is the one about the "abomination of desolation" standing in the holy place. That is the one discussed and revealed in the pages of this magazine for the first time.

It is not a mere coincidence that God has revealed this mystery to us now just prior to its fulfilment and so close to the conclusion of this age. This is a sign that He is about to intervene in world affairs, to bring humanity to account for its waywardness...

Anyone who goes to Jerusalem as Pontifex Maximus and steps on the ground onto which Jesus Christ shed His blood, conscious of what that gesture means, makes himself the "abomination of desolation." That sin will not be forgiven him in this world nor in the world to come.

"For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has TRAMPLED THE SON OF GOD UNDERFOOT, COUNTED THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT BY WHICH HE WAS SANCTIFIED A COMMON THING, AND INSULTED THE SPIRIT OF GRACE?" (Heb.10:26-29, emp. added).

"The same is true of the false prophet and the ministers in the Churches of God. If they wilfully continue to deceive and fleece the followers of Jesus Christ, 'after they have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.'

God does not make anyone an 'abomination of desolation' or a false prophet; they make themselves as such.

It remains now to see who dares make himself one or the other. As of now, based on the power and understanding that God Almighty has given us, and on the fact that these people have done their work in ignorance, we declare that nobody is an abomination or a false prophet. The purpose of this work is to correct, not to condemn. We accuse no one of anything. On the contrary, we give them all the chance to repent and turn to the true God. You know now where to look and what to watch for. Watch, therefore, and be ready, for the day of the Lord is at hand! Watch and sin no more!

"For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation" (Ps.149:4).

"A prudent man foosees evil and hides himself; The simple pass on and are punished." (Pr. 27:12)

When people sin and commit evil, Christians are under obligation to forgive, but sinners must ask that forgiveness in the first place. After being robbed, I gave the ministers in the Churches of God the chance to repent and turn from their evil, but they would not. No regret has been shown by any of them. Jesus Christ told His followers:

"If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matt.5:23-24).

Christians no longer bring their gifts to the altar, but when they pray they are before the altar of God Almighty. This is what God says about the prayer of sinful people.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that He cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity.

No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; he who eats of their eggs dies, and from that which is crushed a viper breaks out.

Their webs will not become garments, nor will they cover themselves with their works; their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace." (Is.59:1-8).

Is there any wonder that the Bible speaks of a great falling away from the truth of God before the return of Jesus Christ? Does anyone have any doubt that the following Scriptures have been fulfilled?

"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2Thess.2:3-4).

The question of who the "man of sin" and the false prophet are was discussed in last year's edition of *The Christian Herald*. If you haven't read it, send for your free copy. What we want to know now is how helpful Garner Ted's "vital key" has been in solving the mysteries of the book of Revelation?

For decades, the two Armstrongs have been venting their fury on Germany for supposedly being the head of the end time ten-headed "beast" which will plunge the world into great tribulation. Contrary to this prophecy, we revealed that it will be Russia who will cause the end time devastation, not Germany. The book of Revelation confirms our views. First, here are some of the Scriptures on which we based our predictions:

"Set up the standard toward Zion. Take refuge! Do not delay!

For **I will bring disaster from the north**, and great destruction." (Jer 4:6).

"O you children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee from the midst of Jerusalem! Blow the trumpet in Tecoa, and set up a signal-fire in Beth Haccerem; For **disaster appears from the north, and great destruction.**" (Jer 6:1).

"Thus says the Lord: "Behold, a **great people comes from the north country**, and a great nation will be **raised from the furthest parts of the earth**. They will hold bow and spear; they are cruel and have no mercy." (Jer 6:22-23).

"Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophecy against him, and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.

Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togamah from the far north and all its troops-many people are with you. Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them. After many days you will be visited. **In the latter years** you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you."

"Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord God: "On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it? Then you will come from your place **out of the far north**, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. **It will be in the latter days** that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes." (Ezek 38: 1-9, 14-16).

Many biblical scholars believe that the words "Rosh", "Meshech" and "Tubal" can be equated with Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk. The fact that these terms are associated with the end time power emerging from the farthest parts of the earth in the north lends credence to this interpretation. Germany is neither to the north of Israel, nor in the furthest parts of the earth.

Notice why God said He will bring Gog against His people: "so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes." God used similar language in ancient times when He brought Israel out of Egypt. He was then hallowed in the eyes of the world by destroying the greatest power the world had known up to that time.

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.' So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.' Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens." (Rom 9:14-18).

"Therefore say to the children of Israel: I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."

"So the Lord said to Moses; 'See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, that he must send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.'" (Ex. 6:6-7; 7:1-5).

Is it a mere coincidence that Russia, in whose land flourished the satanic anti-God communist ideology which terrified the world for seven decades, should become the end time ten-headed beast-power in whose destruction God will be hallowed in the eyes of the world? It is this power and its allies which "will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Rev.17:14).

This brings us to the book of Revelation. For nearly two thousand years, this book has fascinated scholars and lay people alike, but its symbols and prophecies have remained shrouded in mystery. Now, as this age draws to a close, the time has arrived for this book to yield its mysteries. Our concern is with revealing the identity of the beasts mentioned in chapters 12, 13 and 17. We begin with chapter 12.

"Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labour and in pain to give birth."

It is not difficult to conclude that the woman with the garland of twelve stars is spiritual Israel. The twelve stars represent the twelve tribes of Israel. The Child is Jesus Christ; verses four and five confirm this.

"And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads."

The important thing to bear in mind from this verse is that the seven heads and ten horns are unmistakably associated with Satan, the dragon.

"His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne." (Rev. 12:1-5).

The rest of this chapter describes how the dragon was cast out of heaven, how he became enraged with the woman and made war with "the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Now, chapter thirteen.

"Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name."

That each beast represents an empire will become obvious shortly. The theme of seven heads and ten horns common to all beasts links these empires to the dragon who, as we saw, also had seven heads and ten horns.

"Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?'"

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

If anyone has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (Rev 13:2-10).

This chapter describes in prophetic language the appearance of a great Gentile empire which received the power, the throne and the authority of Satan. This empire is said to have been "given authority to continue for forty-two months", to make war with the saints and overcome them. Which empire was that? Looking back in history, we know that the empire which made war with the saints and overcame them was the Roman Empire.

In our No 3, (1993) edition, we revealed that the fourth kingdom of Daniel's chapter seven, which started as a "little horn" and grew to become exceedingly powerful and conquered the holy land, was the Roman empire and its representative king - Pontifex Maximus.

It was Pontifex Maximus who was regarded by Apostle Paul as the man of sin (2 Thess.2:3-4). He was the one who sat in the temple of God, assuming God's title of "Holy Father". Now how do we explain the forty-two months?

Those who have tried to calculate this length of time have made one major error. They have converted the forty-two months into days, then using the biblical principle of a day for a year (Nu.14:34; Ezek.4:4-6) have come to 1260 years. Now, no matter

how you look at history you will never find an empire that lasted that exact length of time. Empires do not normally start and stop on specific days and dates.

The problem arises from not understanding the difference between days and months. A month is less specific than a day, just as a day is less specific than an hour. In the Bible, all these terms are used and each one must be treated accordingly. When God says that this beastly kingdom will continue for forty-two months, He is telling us that the empire will last approximately 1260 years, give or take a few years.

How long did the Roman Empire last? The city of Rome is considered to have been established in about 750 BC. Calculating 1260 years from that date, brings us to 510 AD That is the approximate time when the Roman Empire came to an end. Some history texts place the end of the Roman Empire at 476 AD when the emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed by Odoacer, a German king of the invading "barbarians." If we accept that date as the official end of the empire, it is still not far off the forty-two biblical months. The fact is, Odoacer did not bring an end to the Roman Empire. When he took over the throne in Rome, he acknowledged the overlordship of Zeno, the Emperor who ruled from Constantinople over the eastern part of the empire. Odoacer recognised the superiority of Roman civilisation and wished to preserve it. That was hardly the end of the empire.

Odoacer was eventually slain by Theodoric, the adopted son of Zeno, who ruled Rome until 526 AD. During his reign, a struggle for the throne developed which culminated in the final collapse of the Western part of the Roman Empire.

Now who is the seventh head whose mortal wound was healed, the "beast" "all the world marvelled and followed"? None other than Pontifex Maximus. The beliefs preached by the religion headed by this "king" - immortality of the soul, going to heaven or hell immediately after death, worshipping of images, sanctifying and worshipping the dead - have reached every corner of the earth.

When was he mortally wounded and who are the other six heads? They are the first six kings of Rome: Romulus, Numa Pompilius, Tullus Hostilius, Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius, and Tarquinius Superbus.

During the reign of the last king, in 509 BC, the Roman monarchy received a mortal blow. The Romans overturned their kings and instituted a republic. Henceforth, they no longer had a king. At least that is what the history books will tell you. The truth is different. The monarchy survived, its wound was healed, and the Romans ended up not only with a king, but a "sacred" one at that (for a detailed analysis of this topic see the article on Pontifex Maximus in our No 3, 1993 edition).

Their religious leader, Pontifex Maximus, consolidated his position by assuming the titles, "King Sacrorum" (Sacred King) and "King Sacrificulum" (King of sacrifices).

When the Roman republic evolved into an empire, the emperors overshadowed the chief Roman priests. But when the empire collapsed, the Popes, as they became known by then, rose to undisputed prominence in the Western world.

"At the same time his pontificate [Simplicius, 468-483] saw the disappearance of the Western Roman Empire. The boy emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed in 476; no successor to him was nominated; and when the barbarian patrician ("patrician") Odoacer, the real master of Italy, sent the imperial insignia to Constantinople, the Eastern emperor seemed to have become the sole rightful sovereign of the Roman world. This elimination of the imperial power in the West served perforce to enhance the prestige of the papacy throughout that half of the world, where it had begun to emerge as the focus of authority even since Constantine had left Rome for Constantinople.

"This development made the choice of every new pope a matter of even greater importance than it had been in the past, when rivalries, conflicts and even schisms calling for imperial intervention had sufficiently demonstrated how much was at stake." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1970 ed., Vol.17, p.243, article under "Papacy - the end of the Western Empire").

Revelation 13:11-12 says:

"Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed."

The first "beast" was the old Roman Empire. The seven heads were the seven kings. The head who was mortally wounded, whose wound was healed and rose to world prominence, was the new monarch, Pontifex Maximus.

But who is the new "beast" with two horns? This is very simple. Who succeeded the Roman Empire? The Holy Roman Empire! This empire was different in that it was not a normal empire, but a religious one. The two horns are the two great branches of apostate Christianity: the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Western Catholic Church. The Protestant Churches and other splinter groups are but daughters of their "harlot" mother. They have in common the same diabolical beliefs and practices: immortality of the soul, worship of the Sun god, the same pagan holy days, etc.

The new Holy Roman Empire exercised the authority of the first "beast" by claiming inheritance to the culture, religion, traditions and language of the old Roman Empire. Have you wondered why our major institutions (educational, social, business, etc.) express their mottoes in Latin even though hardly anyone understands that language anymore?

In the Bible, the words "king" and "kingdom" are often interchangeable. The connection between the two empires is made by Pontifex Maximus, who was a king of both empires. The Bible often refers to him as a "beast."

Now what of the signs mentioned in verses 13 and 14?

"He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived."

What are that fire and the signs by which he deceives those who dwell on the earth?

When I was a child, before the communists instituted their reign of terror, my mother used to take me to the church to celebrate Easter at midnight. For me it was not a very pleasant experience because in our church people had to stand during the service. There were only a few seats, and they were usually reserved for the elderly.

The service, which lasted for about a couple of hours, seemed to last forever. Whenever people kneeled for prayer, as they did every so often, I was always the first one down and the last one up. I think my mother and the people around thought I was a very religious boy when all I did was to maximise my time of rest.

At midnight, the priest would go behind the wall separating the "most holy" area from us and with all lights turned off would emerge with a lighted candle. Everybody would chant "Christ is risen - truly is risen". The light, which was then passed around to everyone to light their own candles, was supposed to have come down from heaven. I don't know what other people thought, but even as a child I suspected that a box of matches probably did the trick.

That is the fire by which those who dwell on the earth are deceived. It is a deception, not a real thing. It is interesting that this "fire from heaven" occurs at Easter, another deception by which the Roman "beast" deceives the world.

What of the other signs, what are they? You must have heard about the various "miracles" occurring all over the world: an icon of "virgin Mary" weeping oil in America; the curdled blood of a "saint" liquefying twice a year in a church in Naples; visions of the "blessed Mary" speaking to children at Fatima, Lourdes and elsewhere; relics of dead people in churches in various parts of the world reviving temporarily, etc. Now verse 15 is an interesting one:

"He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed."

Here one beast gives power to the image of another beast to talk and to cause those who do not worship the first beast to be killed. The beast that talks is the head of the Holy Roman Empire, the image of the dragon, Pontifex Maximus - the man who assumed God's title of "Holy Father." Remember, we are made in the image of God, and if the His Holy Spirit is in us we are inspired by Him and become God's children. In like manner, the people who allow the Devil to influence them take on his image and become his children. Isn't this what Jesus Christ said?

"If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.

Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?

He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." (John 8:42-47).

During the Middle Ages, Pontifex Maximus decreed that all people in his dominions who did not worship the images of the old Roman gods, which were adopted by the Catholic Church, must be killed. Thousands of people lost their lives.

One image in particular deserves mention. If you compare the image of the Roman goddess Fortuna, the mascot of the old Roman Empire, with that of Virgin Mary, you will be struck by their similarity. They are both associated with fertility and nature regeneration. And to complete this chapter, here are verses 16 – 18:

"He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666."

The mark on the forehead is the sign of Sunday. It is the belief that people must worship God on the day of the Sun, instead of on the Sabbath. The Sabbath has been the sign of God's people since the beginning of the world, a sign which was reaffirmed at the Exodus with the people of Israel (Ex. 31:13). The Roman "beast" changed that and imposed its own sign upon the world. What about the number 666?

"Ireneus, who was only one generation removed from the apostle John, wrote (Thomas, 1889, p.367): "the name Lateinos [Latindom] contains the number of 666; and it is very likely, because the last kingdom is so called, for they are Latins who now reign". Irenaeus was referring to the numerical equivalent (letters of the Greek alphabet having numerical values of... 666).

'Lateinos' is a highly appropriate word to designate the beast empire founded by the papacy. Not only was the west of the old empire regarded as Latin, while the east was referred to as Greek, but the Roman pontiffs dropped the use of Greek, despite its being the language of the New Testament, and made Latin the official tongue of the Church. The 'Christendom' of history is truly more accurately designated 'Latindom', making the identification of the Beast of the Sea complete. It is of interest to note that the phrase 'the Latin kingdom' (He Latine Basileia) also has a numerical equivalent of 666." (Roger Stokes, "The Jews, Rome, and Armageddon," Adelaide Hills Christadelphian Ecclesia, 1987, p.161)

This brings us to chapter seventeen. Here it is in its totality:

"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.'

So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. But the angel said to me, 'Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.'

Then he said to me, 'The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.'

The mystery woman with the name, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" is the Roman Church and the denominations which sprang from her. There is no need for us to go into further details on this topic here. If there are still people who are not convinced of this fact, nothing else will convince them. Instead, we will concentrate on the symbolical "beasts" and on their heads and horns.

Verse three tells us that this woman sits upon a scarlet coloured beast with seven heads and ten horns. These symbols are familiar from chapter 12, except that there is a difference. The seven heads of chapter 12 had crowns on them and represented the seven kings of Rome. The seven heads of chapter 17 have no crowns, but are said to be seven mountains on which the woman sits (v.9). What city is built upon seven mountains or hills? The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* provides the answer:

"ROME, capital city of the Italian Republic and of the province of Rome. The seat of the Italian government, it is one of the great cultural centres of the world and, as the seat of pope (in the Vatican City), is also the administrative and spiritual capital of the Roman Catholic Church. Rome is on the Tiber river in central Italy... The Tiber flows through the city from north to south, the Seven Hills (the Capitoline, the Quirinal, the Viminal, the Esquiline, the Caelian, the Aventine, and the Palatine) being on the left bank of the river." (Vol.19, p.565, article under Rome).

A well-known metaphor says, "all roads lead to Rome." Now we discover that most of the biblical "beasts" lead to Rome too. Whether they are crowns, hills or horns, they identify Rome, the Roman empires and their King, Pontifex Maximus, as the prophetic "beasts".

THE TEN HORNS

We have not discussed the ten horns until now because we did not have enough information. Chapter 13 says that Apostle John "saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name." From this we can conclude that the ten horns represent ten kings or leaders but who they are and in what country they might arise we do not yet know.

In the past, we have accepted the preaching of the Churches of God that these horns represent ten revivals of the Roman empire, plus ten leaders who shall rise in the countries of the European Community, one of them ruling over Germany. As with so many of their beliefs, there is no biblical justification for this one either, not the least because their so-called revivals are quite arbitrarily set. They have allowed their phobias and prejudices against Germany to cloud their understanding of the Scriptures. Germany may have played an important role in the past, but her future role, as far as the history of the people of God is concerned, is minimal.

The prophecies of Daniel reveal the kingdom in which these horns will rise:

"And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters all things; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile.

"As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (Daniel 2:40-44).

The ten toes represent ten kings that will rise in the end time in the fourth kingdom when God will establish the Millennial Kingdom. In our No 3, (1993) edition of *The Christian Herald*, we identified the fourth kingdom as that of Rome. The Roman religious empire, which is in existence today, extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the American continent to much of Africa. God regards the Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal Churches as belonging to this empire.

In what part of this empire then will the ten kings arise? Since the end time disaster comes from the north, and since the ten kings belong to the "beast" that will fight Jesus Christ on His return, these kings could belong to none other than the Commonwealth of Independent States. Once again, Russia is identified as the leading power that will trigger the end time great tribulation.

For a long time the Russian Orthodox leaders have regarded Moscow as the third Rome. Compare this with what Pope John Paul II declared in his 1994 Easter message:

"The cross must never be devalued. This is the cry of Rome, of Moscow, of Constantinople and of all Christianity. During the procession, the Pope had for the first time read prayers prepared by the head of the Greek Orthodox Church... The prayers were written by Bartolomeus I, Archbishop of Constantinople and head of the Greek Orthodox Church, at the invitation of the Holy See, in the first ecumenical rite of its kind since the two churches split in 1054...

The Pope's Holy Week ceremonies culminate today when he celebrates Mass in St Peter's Square and delivers his twice-yearly "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) blessing and message." (*The Sun-Herald*, April 3, 1994).

The Pope addresses the world in his "Urbi et Orbi" speeches, because he regards himself as the "Universal Shepherd". If there was any doubt that the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church belong to the same camp - the same "beast" - this should dispel it.

It is remarkable that during the seven decades of Soviet rule, the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church never condemned the atrocities committed by the Soviet regime. Whenever the Soviet Union was criticised in international forums for human rights violations, the Russian Orthodox leaders defended the record of the Soviet government. Now that the Russian people are able to go to church freely and the churches are full of people again, they pose themselves as champions of the people. Any wonder that God regards them as "beasts".

Now take a look at the following verses again:

"And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These have one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Rev.17:12-14).

The ten leaders will give their power and authority to the "beast" while they receive authority for "one hour" to rule as kings. This means that they will recognise the church's authority in moral and spiritual matters, while they receive the church's blessings in enforcing their rule over the people.

Why will they make war with Jesus Christ - the Lamb - when He returns to this earth? Because the Russian Orthodox leaders, as well as the Catholic and other religious leaders, know that when Jesus Christ returns, their reign will end. They know that the Christ we preach is not the same as their christ, therefore they plan to fight Him.

Ezekiel said that in the latter days, a company of nations led by Rosh (Russia) would come like a cloud against the people who were "brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel"? Now why would a power like Russia use its military might against a tiny nation like Israel? Because Jesus Christ must return to the people who pierced Him - His own people. If there is no nation of Israel, Jesus Christ cannot return, or so His enemies would think. The prophet Zechariah wrote:

"In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the Lord before them.

It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look upon Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn." (Zech. 12:8-10).

Last year, we concluded our No 3 edition with a call to repentance to all world leaders, and a promise that if they stop deceiving and exploiting people in the name of God their sins will be forgiven. They refused to repent and turn from their evil ways even though previously unveiled prophecies and mysteries were revealed as a sign of inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Add to that what is being revealed in this edition, and when will they realise that what we said is coming true, they will make "war" with us too, and will prepare to fight our Lord on His return.

For more than three years, an invisible hand has been guiding us through the prophecies and mysteries of the Bible which we revealed to the world. We take no credit for these revelations, for we know that we are unworthy of the work we do. As Jesus Christ said:

"So like wise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" (Luke 17:10).

Jeremiah the prophet wrote:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." (Jer. 17:9-10).

And Apostle Paul said:

"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God-through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. 7:22-25; 8:1-2).

If the servants of God and of Jesus Christ have acknowledged that they were weak and sinful people, and had problems controlling their own impulses (and we make a similar confession), then so can those whom we have called to repentance. Is it not infinitely better to go before the people now and say, "we have made an error, we have deceived you and led you on the wrong path," than to wait until the judgment time when no repentance is possible?

If you accept God's call to repentance and begin a life of righteousness even at this late hour, Jesus Christ will grant you the "Promise" - the Holy Spirit - and hope of eternal life in His Kingdom. You cannot postpone this decision. The time is fast approaching when repentance is no longer possible:

"And he said to me, 'Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.' And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.' Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city [of God]." (Rev. 22:10-14).

Revelation 10:4-7 says:

"Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.'

And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his hand to heaven and swear by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets."

Just before the sounding of the seventh angel, the mystery of God will be finished, meaning that the prophecies of this book will be revealed. There is an interruption of prophecies at that point, after which there follow the actions of the two witnesses (Ch.11). The inference is that during their time, these prophecies will be revealed. Only a deaf and blind person would not realise that these prophecies are being fulfilled right now.

The Churches of God are still grappling with the four horsemen of chapter six, when these prophecies have already been fulfilled. We have the knowledge of the prophecies of the book of Revelation, but are restricted by our limited abilities of how much we can reveal. We are giving you the knowledge of those prophecies which are imminent or in the process of being fulfilled so that you may repent and save yourselves from the impending great tribulation.

Revelation 16:17-21 picks up the story of the seventh angel. It says that when he shall sound his trumpet, the great tribulation will be unleashed upon the world.

Chapter seventeen then reveals who shall unleash that tribulation: the "beast" from the north with seven heads, ten horns and seven kings. We know who the seven heads and the ten horns are, but who are the seven kings?

"There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition."

Astonishingly, these verses tell us almost to the year when the Great Tribulation will be unleashed.

We know that the end time power that would trigger the great tribulation is Russia. We also know that in the end time there will be ten kings leading a "company" of ten nations against Israel. Where, then, do the seven kings fit into this scheme of things, for it is clear that they belong to this end time power? This was a difficult prophecy to unlock, but unlock we did it.

There have been six distinct eras in the history of the Soviet Union, each one being associated with a major figure. These are: 1. Establishment under Lenin; 2. Consolidation under Stalin; 3. Relaxation under Krushchev; 4. Stagnation under Breshnev; 5. Openness under Gorbachov; and, 6. Transformation under Yeltsin.

The other few figures that jostled for power or held it temporarily between these eras have had such a minor role and influence upon the history of the Soviet Union that they cannot be counted as important for prophetic purposes. For example, when Lenin died, it was widely expected that Trotsky or Bucharin would succeed him. Trotsky even held command for a few months, but in the end foxy Stalin outwitted and eliminated them both. When Stalin died, Beria held the leading position for a few months too. When he was eliminated, Bulganin and Malenkov jostled for power until Khrushchev ousted them. Khrushchev was overturned by Breshnev in a coup-de-tat. That was the only "clean" transfer of power. When Breshnev died, Andropov and Chernenko warmed the chair for Gorbachov. Finally, Yeltsin succeeded Gorbachov and changed the Soviet Union.

The history of Israel offers similar examples. In the transition between Saul and David, Ishbosheth, Saul's son, ruled over Israel for two years (2Sa.2:8-10), yet he is not listed among the kings of Israel. David lost his throne temporarily to his son, Absalom. Absalom is not counted among the kings of Israel either. There have been other examples.

The prophecy about the "kings" of Russia gives the time for its own revelation:

"There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time."

The term "one is" tells us that it is in the reign of this king that the prophecy will be revealed. The five fallen kings are: Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Breshnev and Gorbachov. Yeltsin is the present "king." It is in his reign that we received the revelation of this prophecy.

When the last "king" comes, "he must continue a short time." Yeltsin's replacement will not waste much time before he will plunge the world into catastrophe. How long is "a short time"? We are not being told, but clearly it could not be a long time.

Finally, the last mystery connected with this prophecy is revealed:

"And the beast that was, and is not, is also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition."

In the Bible, only one man has been described as a beast who will be present when Jesus Christ returns. He is Pontifex Maximus. He is the beast whose deadly wound was healed, "who was [a king], and is not [a king]", and yet he is the eighth [king]. The question now is, how could he be the eighth, and part of the seven? If this revelation is not enough to dumbfound anybody, nothing else will. Only one person in the history of the world, who has held the position of Pontifex Maximus, could fit such a description, and that is the current Pontiff.

Carol Vojtila is of Polish origin, and the Poles, the Yugoslavs and the Russians belong to the same family of Slavic people. He is of the same Slavic origin as the seven Russian "kings", and that makes him the eighth "king".

Is it a mere coincidence that the two acts which pre-empt the return of Jesus Christ - the "abomination of desolation" standing in the holy place, and the beast from the north attacking Israel - are both of Slavic origin?

The major prophetic mysteries about the end time have been revealed. Now the seventh angel may sound his trumpet.

FALSE PROPHETS AND THE END TIME

This should be the end of the story, except that there is a need for us to warn our readers against a multitude of "prophets" who have filled the world with deceptive literature about the end time prophecies. One person who has gained quite a following on the claim that he is Elijah, wrote:

"Who am I? I am a witness to the truth, the truth of God, as He has revealed it to me. You can prove this to yourself, by reading what God has inspired me to write, and check-up, and compare it with the very Word of God itself..."

"Who am I? I am a servant of the living God, the Almighty God, the Highest God! I am a spokesman, a messenger sent from God! Believe it -- and obey -- and you can save your life! Disbelieve it, and disobey God's warning message, and ignore His truth -- and DIE!" (William F. Dankenbring, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness!* Triumph Prophetic Ministries, Altadena, California [1988]).

We noted earlier that California seems to have a particular attraction to the "messengers from God". That alone can be a warning about what to expect. So let us see what did this "witness to the truth" had to say?

"In all my twenty-five years of writing, I have never written on a more important, vital, crucial subject than this one ["vital", remember that word? Garner Ted Armstrong had something "vital" for us too. It seems to be the trademark of the "messengers from God"]. The time has come to unmask the devil -- to reveal the identity of the long-awaited "Beast of Revelation." You may not believe it yet, you may scoff and laugh, but just wait and you will see the most diabolical man of all human history -- the anti-type of Antiochus Epiphanes, "God Manifest" -- soon take his place at centre-stage on the world scene, at the head of the most economically and militarily powerful Empire in all human history -- a revival of the "Holy Roman Empire" of the Hapsburg Period! It is his plan. He has envisioned it since the middle of World War II when he obtained his doctorate at Vienna University and served as an intelligence officer for the Wehrmacht..."

Just who is this increasingly mysterious man? Why did the world's terrorists and anti-Semitic leaders welcome his election? Why was the state of Israel strangely silent during the election and campaign? Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir, in the official Israeli reaction to Waldheim's election, warned, "If the world decides to keep silent the hideous monster of Nazism could raise its head again..."

In Waldheim's Reich, or Kingdom, Germany would serve as the "strong heartland..." Bible prophecy shows that in the End Times, in which we are living and breathing, today, a dramatic European colossus -- a federation of ten nations -- will come together to forge the greatest military and economic power has ever known... Prophecy indicates that several of these nations will break away from European Community when it becomes completely integrated -- the schedule is for total economic integration by 1992, just four years from today! ("Dracula" -- "The Ghost of Transilvania", The Waldheim File -- The Beast of Revelation Rises Up!)"

"Am I the only one who sees the danger? Am I the only one who dares to shout the warning? Why? Can't others see what is happening in front of their very eyes? Tremendous events are taking place in Europe which will fundamentally alter the future of this planet, and which are setting the stage for one of the most dire events of all human history -- the phenomenal resurrection out of a seemingly "bottomless pit" of the powerful "HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE" -- the very same historic "Empire" that was ruled over by Justinian, Charlemagne, Charles of Hapsburg, Otto the Great of Germany, and Napoleon Bonaparte! The last "resurrection" of that ill-starred Empire was ruled by none other than Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler. But once again plans are in the making for a fantastic revival of that ancient church-state system -- a political/religious union that will astound the world!"

"I have been predicting the formation of such a union since 1965 when I wrote a magazine article entitled "German Nuclear Arms -- A Grave Danger?"...

According to Bible prophecy, this future resurrection of the "Roman Empire," emerging out of the "European Union" and "Common Market" of the present time, as those nations weld and forge themselves into an increasingly united political structure, will spring into existence suddenly, as if virtually out of nowhere. And it will be a supremely strong military power, as well!

When will it happen? All the signs and evidence point conclusively to the early 1990's. According to the increasing signs, the world economy is for a gigantic rupture and shake-up, and will crash in the early 1990's -- most probably 1990, leading to an awesome and unparalleled "Great World Depression" unlike anything the world has ever seen, including the "Great Depression" of the 1930's...

And to start the engine of Europe humming, a super-powerful, charismatic leader will emerge -- a man the nations of Europe will willingly follow -- an astute politician, a clever and highly intelligent man, a man "wise as Daniel," according to the prophecies of Ezekiel, a man who will "conquer" the nations of Europe by "flattery" and court their leaders.

Who is this man? This man will also emerge as the supreme creator of a future "Holocaust" which will make the "Holocaust" of the 1930's and 1940's seem tame by comparison -- he will be at heart a virulent, unreconstructed NAZI and vicious Anti-Semite...

Who will this vicious anti-Semite, anti-Christ, and charismatic leader be? ...You will be astonished beyond measure! [He is] Kurt Waldheim!" (The Return of the Nazis? KURT WALDHEIM MEETS THE POPE. IS WALDHEIM THE "BEAST OF REVELATION?" " *Prophecy Flash*," June 20, 1987).

Were you "astonished beyond measure" at the unveiling of this "Beast of Revelation"? Waldheim the "Beast of Revelation? The man virtually vanished from history as soon as he relinquished the Austrian Presidency.

That is the most "important, vital, crucial subject" this "messenger from God" has written. Do you want to know what he says in his less "important" writings? We don't and have cut all our links with him.

There is one thing that unites many of these "prophets from God," for there are many of them. They all seem to have received their training in the Worldwide Church of God. Herbert W. Armstrong would be proud of them if he could see their deceptions and the extraordinary confusion they are creating in the world.

One is tempted to think that "Babylon, the Mother of Harlots" is not the Roman Church but the Worldwide Church of God. Maybe we should go back to the Scriptures and take a closer look. Recently, an American publication entitled "Ambassador Report", listed no less than thirty "prophets", groupings or "Churches of God" which have sprung from the Worldwide Church of God.

Naturally, he put us among them too, even though we have disowned the fallacies of Armstrongism. At least they gave us a good review. They said that our "theological journal" includes insightful commentary about the WCG and CGI, and is "more substantive than those put out by many WCG-related groups." We are grateful for that, but we would have been even more grateful if they had sent as a courtesy copy of their publication; we sent them ours.

We were startled by the sudden rush of new requests for our publications. We did not know what was happening until one person mentioned that favourable review. But don't let that deter you friends - keep writing about us. Meantime, "Watch and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36).

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

It took some time for this work to be noticed, but now we find ourselves the centre of unusual attention from a number of quarters. The Churches of God, for example, ignored us for the first couple of years, thinking perhaps that we were just a passing phenomenon. But now they are advancing a formidable array of counter arguments in an attempt to discredit us. Nothing makes us happier than to face their challenge.

Recently, the *Plain Truth* - the magazine of the Worldwide Church of God, which has become renowned for being neither plain nor truthful - took issue with the topic we discussed in the following passage:

"When you pray, imagine the Father and Jesus Christ on their throne listening to you, ready to help you overcome your problems and weaknesses. Do not think of God as being distant and unapproachable, but as a loving and forgiving Father.

You must not put anyone between you and God such a saint or Mary the mother of Jesus. Neither should you listen to those who say that God and Jesus Christ are not distinct persons. This is what the ministers in the Worldwide Church of God are preaching these days:

"We do not believe that the Bible teaches that the Father and the Son are persons. Neither do we believe that the Father created Jesus." (*The Plain Truth*, January 1993, p.2).

"What Bible do these people read? We have not heard of a Bible that does not teach that God created us in His image. If He created us in His image, then we look like Him, and He like us. If Jesus Christ was not created by the Father then to whom did He pray and whom did He call Father? To say that He was not created by God is to deny that He had a Father and that is blasphemy. Have these people ever read these Scriptures:

"He is the image of the invisible God, **the firstborn** over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have preeminence" (Col.1:15-18).

"And to the angel of the church of Laodicea write: 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the beginning of the creation of God'" (Rev.3:14).

"This only shows how far the Churches of God have departed from the truth. Any wonder that Elijah must come to restore all things. Jesus Christ took upon Himself human nature to show us the way to salvation. He delivered to us the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, was crucified, resurrected, and was seen by hundreds of people before He ascended to heaven. Yet, those who claim to be His ministers say that neither He nor the Father are persons. Great is the spiritual darkness that has fallen upon this world.

If you wonder why we keep referring to the Churches of God, it is because they play an important role in the Bible, and because they have become the leading deceivers in the world today." (*The Christian Herald*, No 3 (1993), p.9).

In the May/June, 1994 issue of *The Plain Truth*, a lengthy article appeared in which earlier heresies were not only reiterated, but a new set of blasphemies were produced. Here are a couple of examples:

"But we are not like God in every respect. 'Certainly not in bodily form, the upright position, or commanding aspect of the man, since God has no bodily form,' points out the Keil and Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*, (Vol.1, Genesis 1:24-31)."

This is how the evangelists of the Worldwide Church of God intend to answer our arguments - by quoting people who are not even members of the church. It is hard to imagine people with any knowledge of the Bible making more unscriptural statements.

Since we quoted the Bible extensively to substantiate our statements and to prove that their assertions are wrong, we hoped that they would give us the courtesy of replying in kind. This wasn't to be. Instead, they quoted Keil and Delitzsch. You haven't heard of Keil and Delitzsch? Don't worry, we haven't heard of them either. It must their neighbours.

You know you are dealing with people of low scriptural competency when they rely on other people's commentaries to tell them what is in the Bible. If their assertion that God has no image was not enough, they went on to say this:

"Adam and Eve's bodies did not image God... Adam and Eve's bodies were what they had in common with animals."

No further comment needed, except these Scripture:

"But God gives a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another of beasts, another of fish, and another of birds"

"And as we have born the image of the man of dust [who was created in the image of God], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man [Jesus Christ who was the very God Himself]." (1Cor. 15:38-39, 49).

We recorded their blasphemy (and prayed that the Almighty forgives us for doing so), but it was important to show you how they are steering people away from the truth of God and subtly inculcating them with evolutionary fallacies.

Another passage in *The Christian Herald* which seems to have disturbed our nemesis is this:

"I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (Rev.22:13). God is permanent, ageless and all encompassing. We live in Him and through Him. We must therefore tune ourselves into the wavelength of His mind (Phil.2:5) if we want to achieve perfection and be with Him and Jesus Christ forever.

This is what the purpose of life is all about - to become holy and perfect as our father is holy and perfect (1Peter 1:15-16; Matt.5:48). God cannot entrust us with eternity until we are perfect as He is. Then He will resurrect us into His Kingdom and we shall be with Him forever. Every sin we commit derails us from the path of salvation and makes it that much more difficult to achieve our goal.

The much-vaunted "hell" is nowhere else but here on earth. Anyone who fails to understand the purpose of the trials and tribulations which human beings must endure, fails to understand the purpose of life. We are born into this world to overcome our

human nature and to become God-like. That is why we are called the children of God (Deut.14:1; Ps.82:6; John 10:34), why God wants us to call Him Father (Matt.6:6,8,9), and why Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers (Heb.2:11).

The ministers in the Churches of God have excelled themselves again by denying that we can become the sons of God just like Jesus Christ. Because the Holy Spirit does not allow them to call themselves sons of God, they want to make everyone else believe the same, and thus lose their salvation. Salvation is dependent upon what people believe, that is why the Apostles emphasised the importance of belief.

We, who believe, are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). We believe, therefore we know that we are the children of God and that He will resurrect us at the appointed time.

God will not force anyone into His Kingdom against their beliefs. Many times Jesus Christ said to those who sought His healing, "be according to your belief." So, believe, because a lot of things depend on it, including your eternal life." (*The Christian Herald*, No 3 (1993), p.48).

They counter these statements by asking and answering their own question: "What did Jesus mean when He said, 'You are gods' (John 10:34)?"

To answer the crowd, Jesus then quoted from Psalm 82:6. "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?" This quote from the Scriptures took the people by surprise. In Psalm 82, God speaks to the human judges of Israel, commanding them to righteously judge the people. He calls them "gods," referring to their high, God-given office...

Jesus then continued: "If he [God] called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came - and the Scripture cannot be broken - what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?" (John 10:35-36). Thus, Christ used a play on words to confuse his attackers. In essence, he said: "If in the Scriptures, 'gods' can refer to unjust human judges, how much more can the name 'God' refer to me?" Jesus was not telling these people that humans are literally gods. Instead, he was cautioning them about standing in the place of judgement against him, the Son of God." (*The Plain Truth*, Feb., 1994).

There is a consistent pattern with the Churches of God of never accepting the Scriptures for what they say if they interfere with their doctrines and preconceived ideas. They want everyone to believe that, without their help, the Bible cannot be understood. It is as if God used a special language in the Bible which only they understand. And what understanding!

They deny that human beings are the sons of God, that they are made in the image of God, and that God and Jesus Christ have any image. They deny the very purpose for which human beings were created, namely, to become spiritual sons of God and receive eternal life in God's eternal Kingdom. If the following additional examples do not make this clear, and do not put an end to this debate, then we rest our case. These are the words of Jesus Christ to Mary Magdalene immediately after His resurrection:

"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.'" (John 20:17).

Was He speaking about judges here? The Son of God, bearing the image of God and of human beings, was calling His followers "brethren" and telling them that His Father was also their Father and His God was also their God.

Later that day, He showed Himself to His disciples in the same human form. Not long after that, He was seen rising to heaven. What happened to Him after He disappeared from sight, did He lose that image? Of course not! He simply regained His spiritual image, which He retains to this day.

In the book of Revelation (chapters 1, 4, 5, 21 and 22) we are given glimpses of heaven and the throne of God, where both the images of Jesus Christ and of the Father appear. In the Old Testament, similar images can be found in the books of Daniel (chapters 7 and 10), Ezekiel (chapter 1 ff) and others. For those who want further proof that we are indeed the children of God, here are a few more examples:

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

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith (1John 3:1-3, 7-10; 4:1,4; 5:4).

Why do these people go to such lengths to put doubt in people's minds about their potential and purpose and of their life? The first humans fell for the trap set by Satan by allowing doubt to enter their hearts about the promises of their Creator. Now we are witnessing a similar scenario, only on a much larger scale. And who are the perpetrators this time? The Church that used to claim that it was the only true Church of God in the world.

So much for the Worldwide Church of God. Now let us have a look at the Church of God, International. Garner Ted Armstrong and his evangelists have also been paying us unusual attention lately. They seem to have taken issue with the following passage:

"No new yoke and no other troubles are to be placed upon those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, except to abstain from idols, sexual immorality, things strangled and from blood [Acts 15:13-21]. Where are the "first tithe", the "second tithe", the "third tithe", the mandatory Holy Day offerings and the special offerings in these writings?

Hardly anyone who has been touched by the present ministers in the Churches of God has not suffered financial, personal or family problems. They specialise in splitting families and in causing problems for their members. That seems to be their trademark. A

more appropriate name for them would be 'the synagogue of trouble makers'. Why synagogue? Because they preach, among other things, the Old Testament restrictions about food.

In the Old Testament, such restrictions were in accordance with the law of God, but in the New Testament they no longer are. Since Jesus Christ purified everything, there is no longer such a thing as a clean or unclean animal. Apostle Paul went so far as to say that those who preach such doctrines are inspired by demons:

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 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. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." (1 Ti.4:3).

All creatures are to be received with thanksgiving by those who know the truth. Those who preach otherwise do not know the truth. Christians are not made unclean by eating flesh which previously was thought to be unclean.

"Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." (Matt.15:11).
"Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience sake; for 'The earth is the Lord's and its fullness. If any of those who do not believe invite you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no questions for conscience sake.'" (1 Cor.10: 25-27).

The ministers in the Churches of God think that they know better than Jesus Christ and His Apostles and have taken upon themselves to override their teachings. Jesus Christ gave His followers power not only over all kinds of flesh, but also over the venom of serpents and scorpions (see Luke 10:19; Mk.16:18; Acts 28:3-5). If people suffer from these things it is because their faith is weak, but it was not so from the beginning." (*The Christian Herald*, No 3 (1993), pp.27-28).

And this is how they reply to these writings:

"It's well known, even in our world of hitech refrigeration and high standards of hygienic food-handling, that certain foods are likely to cause illness. High on the list of meat with a medical health warning are the so-called "unclean" meats listed in Scripture...

In fact, an open-minded study of the Scriptures [They talk about open-minded study of the Scriptures!] forces only one answer to our question. Yes, some meats are unfit to eat! And Christians, especially, in whom dwells the Spirit of God, who are His "temple," who are Christ's body, ought to give heed to the Bible's dietary laws!" (*The International News*, Vol.XV, No 1, 1994).

Notice the sleight of hand? Not the Old Testament dietary laws but the Bible's dietary laws. They see no difference between the Old and the New Testaments in this regard. They went on to publish a long list of "clean" animals which people can eat. They find it hard to change their doctrine about dietary laws because it is part of an elaborate hoax which includes questionable tithing doctrines, attendance at special feast sites, unquestioned obedience to ruthless ministry, complete isolation from "unconverted" friends and family, etc.

They say that people who eat "unclean" meats are likely to get sick. People can get sick by eating any food that has not been properly prepared or is spoilt. If the dietary laws were any guide to people's health, the Chinese people should have perished long ago, for they eat a wide variety of foods which are not kosher by Jewish standards. Yet they are the most numerous people on earth, and their food is both delicious and nutritious.

The Churches of God cannot afford to let their dietary laws go because if they do all their other doctrines will come under question too. If that were to happen, they would all be put out in the street. What could people do who have done little else in their life than collect taxes ('tithes and offerings' they call them)?

They used to pride themselves in being inspired preachers, in being able to understand God's prophecies on pretext that God's Holy Spirit worked with them. We let our readers decide with whom the Holy Spirit works these days.

Remember the prophecy about the "abomination of desolation" in *The Christian Herald* No 3? Garner Ted Armstrong said that it is an idol which will be placed in a temple which is yet to be built in Jerusalem. We painstakingly proved that the holy place is not to be found in any new temple, that it is the ground on which Jesus Christ was crucified and spilt His blood. Now not only are they continuing to preach this fallacy, they have linked it to their dietary law:

"Clearly God still holds the eating of unclean flesh as an abomination! Anciently, God's Temple was desecrated by the sacrifice of an unclean animal on the altar. Very soon there will be a temple (of sorts) again standing in Jerusalem. Again that temple will be desecrated. Is it possible that the coming Antichrist will enforce the ritual eating of swine's flesh? That once again the altar will be defiled by the sacrifice of a pig upon it? That a required part of the coming universal religion will be eating of "the abomination"? If so, then it will surely be sin to eat the unclean!"

This time the "abomination of desolation" is no longer an idol, but a pig. Did you notice whom they regard as "Antichrist"? Someone who does not believe in their dietary laws, who supposedly desecrates this mythical altar with a swine. They are laying the groundwork for turning the tables on witnesses of God who are preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the tenets of the New Testament.

If you want to understand what is happening in the world these days, remember the words of the Apostles:

"Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." (2Cor.11:14,15).

STATE OF THE WORLD

A round-up of news and commentaries from around the world highlighting the state of the world as this age nears its conclusion.

POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

"RISE OF EXTREMISM BRINGS BACK MEMORIES OF 1930s. The year 1993 was a schizoid time in world affairs, with advances in international co-operation over-shadowed by gruesome ethnic wars and a surge in political extremism. While proponents of a New World Order could claim a few stunning victories, it was clear by the end of the year that the world was still a dangerous place to live." (*The Australian*, December 24, 1993).

"STATES MEET TO PUT NEW LIFE INTO CIS. MOSCOW: Leading officials from 10 former Soviet republics met here yesterday to try to breathe life into the Commonwealth of Independent States as a vehicle for common defence and foreign policies. While five republics stayed away - the three Baltic States, Moldova and Turkmenistan - the attendance of foreign and defence ministers from the others was a hopeful sign for next month's meeting of leaders of former Soviet republics in Moscow. The Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Andrey Kozirev, told the meeting: 'We will add a new dimension to the CIS. We will make it an active factor in international as well as regional development., He said there had been a 'sobering-up from the euphoria of parting of the ways' in the former Soviet Union and called for a reintegration 'on a basis of sovereignty and equality'" (*SMH*, August 26, 1993).

"YELTSIN'S FOES PARDONED. MOSCOW: The Russian Parliament voted yesterday to pardon foes of President Boris Yeltsin who staged an armed rebellion last October and an attempted communist coup in August 1991. Deputies voted 253-67 on a resolution which also gave amnesty to businessmen convicted in the former communist era for activities no longer considered crimes." (*The Australian*, Feb. 24, 1994).

"YELTSIN PRESSES WEST OVER PEACE PROCESS. MOSCOW: The Russian President, Mr Boris Yeltsin, is pressing Western nations to bring warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina to the peace table, making it clear that Russia intends to continue its high-profile role in settling the Bosnian conflict... Russian officials suggested that a summit might be held in Moscow, a move likely to be resisted by Bosnian Government, which has not welcomed Russia's involvement... The move renewed Russia's historic role in the Balkans and protected Serbs, 'who are our kin in religion, culture and national spirit'. Mr Kostikov, Mr Yeltsin's press secretary, said UN and NATO diplomacy had nearly brought the world to the brink of crisis and a world war." (*SMH*, February 23, 1994).

"HOW THE WEST CAN HELP RUSSIA DELIVER THE GOODS. President Boris Yeltsin is by far the best exponent of democracy and progress, and hence the path to stability. Not everyone agrees with Warren Christopher, the United States Secretary of State. Since last month's election, in which ex-communists and ranting nationalists did so well, many outsiders have grown gloomy about Russia. The gloom comes in three parts. First is the realisation that, despite the assault on the Russian parliament last October that was supposed to defeat the hard-liners, the new parliament may be as obstructive as the old one. Ex-communists are being appointed to all sorts of bodies. Second is the unending sound of the Russian economy as it gurgles down the drain. Third is the growing evidence that Russians of many stripes still hanker for an empire. All in all, the West's policy towards Russia seems to have failed...

In response to this muddle, the Russians have changed their attitude to the West. At one time, the US enjoyed top spot in Russian estimation. Now, acclamation has changed to hostility. Meanwhile, Russia's foreign policy has come under the control of those who put Russian power in the former Soviet Union top of the foreign agenda. With ex-communists and nationalists in the ascendant and an economy that has yet to deliver the goods, Russia is cantankerous and therefore dangerous... If all this is not to go wrong, the West urgently needs to fashion a policy towards Russia that supports reform and discourages delusions of imperial grandeur." (*The Australian*, Jan. 19, 1994).

"WELCOME CHANGE FOR CLINTON. After a week at home marred by an old Little Rock land scandal, now known ominously as Whitewater, Clinton is about to test the post Cold War ebb and flow of Europe. But this is not going to be a pleasure cruise, either. Clinton has never presented himself as the foreign policy president. There's the issue of charting a new course for the Atlantic Alliance at the NATO summit, there is the edginess of emergent East European democracies over the rise of neofascism in Russia, there is the very survival of Boris Yeltsin's ship of state and, of course, there's Bosnia. ...Zhirinovskiy's emergence is why Russia's reformers now oppose the eastward extension of NATO's security shield. Don't fuel his imperial delusions. So Yeltsin warned last week that a NATO on Russia's doorstep would promote 'undesirable moods in civilian and military circles'. Zhirinovskiy is the man who wants to take back Alaska and make it a province of Mother Russia. How much respect would he give newly independent former satellites? ...There is another factor at work in the policy mix. Russia retains the second most awesome capacity to destroy the world." (Philip McCarthy, *SMH*, Jan. 10, 1994).

"CLINTON NAMED. RUSSIAN nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy told television interviewer David Frost that President Bill Clinton wants to be the ruler of the world and that 'America would like to destroy Russia.'" (*The Sun-Herald*, March 27, 1994).

"MAD VLAD AND DANGEROUS TO KNOW. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy is a phenomenon. Leader of the Liberal Democrats, who control Russia's parliament, he storms through Europe peddling his expansionist, ultra-nationalist ideas. Just how frightened should we be?

'We don't know how far Russia's borders will stretch. Once we decide, you will have to accept that decision.' The man who threatened to invade Finland and Alaska to restore Russia's borders, and nuke the West, is resting between parliamentary sessions on the ninth floor of a hotel overlooking the White House. He is looking in front of an enormous map of the world, abusing peons and bodyguards who stand to attention with fear clearly etched on their faces. 'Don't be afraid, the war hasn't begun,' one says nervously to me over the din of Zhirinovskiy's screams, and then adds under his breath, 'yet.'" (*The Australian Magazine*, May 23 - 29, 1994)

"US TO GET TOUGH ON RUSSIA IN POLICY SHIFT. The Clinton administration has decided on a fundamental shift in its policy towards Russia amid growing concern that President Yeltsin is losing control at home while seeking to expand Moscow's influence abroad. 'The new policy simply reflects the new reality,' said one senior White House official. 'There is a realisation that Russia today is a much more powerful and shrewder diplomatic actor abroad than it was even a couple of months ago. At the same time the economy is falling apart and Yeltsin is in trouble.'" (James Adams, *The Australian*, April 11, 1994).

"NONE SHALL SLEEP SHOULD RUSSIA START TO BACKSLIDE. Russia remains Europe's most formidable military power, and the only country that retains the power to destroy the United States and much of the rest of the world. Future generations will not forgive the United States and the West if we fail to make every effort to discourage the re-emergence of tyranny and militarism in Russia." (*SMH*, Dec. 30, 1993).

"ATROCITY AND OUTRAGE. Spectres of barbarism in Bosnia compel the US and Europe to ponder: Is it time to intervene? The shock of recognition is acute. Skeletal figures behind barbed wire. Murdered babies in a bus. Two and a half million people driven from their homes in an orgy of 'ethnic cleansing.' Detention camps, maybe even concentration camps. Surely these pictures and stories come from another time - the Dark Ages, the Thirty Years' War, Hitler's heyday. Psychic defences struggle to minimise, to deny, to forget. Not here; not now. Europeans were supposed to have learned from the last terrible war on their soil not to murder their neighbours. Educated people, on the verge of the 21st century, in a relatively prosperous country that is party to multiple human-rights treaties, do not drive innocents from their homes, shoot orphans, build detention camps. But the evidence, accumulating for months, is now inescapable; like an addiction, hatred is consuming the people who used to call themselves Yugoslavs. Every throat slit makes someone else thirst for blood. 'They killed my husband and son,' says a tearful Bosnian refugee. 'They burned our home. But they can never rest easy, because one day we will do the same to them, or worse. My children will get their revenge, or their children.' No one anywhere can pretend any longer not to know what barbarity has engulfed the people of the former Yugoslavia." (*Time*, Aug. 17, 1992).

"BOSNIANS DECRY RAPE, TORTURE. SYDNEY: 800 Bosnians and supporters marched from Circular Quay yesterday in a rally with several refugees who had only arrived from Serbian concentration camps. Organised by the Australian Women's Committee to publicise torture and 'ethnic cleansing', which it says has resulted in 200 000 Muslim deaths and 60 000 rapes of females aged five to 85, the rally was held concurrently with marches in Brisbane and Canberra." (*The Sun-Herald*, July 18, 1993).

"UNITED EUROPE MUST DEFEAT THE DEMON OF NATIONALISM. Czech President Vaclav Havel says Europe lacks an ethos... Twice this century all of Europe has paid a tragic price for the narrow-mindedness and lack of imagination of its democracies. These democracies first failed when confronted with Nazism; they retreated and refused this evil in the bud, only to have to pay a million times more in the struggle against Nazism in full bloom. They failed a second time when they allowed Stalin to swallow up one half of our continent and bring history there to a halt. Today this failure is tragically coming to haunt not only those who have recently escaped from Soviet tyranny, but everyone. There is a saying, 'Everything good and evil comes in threes'. Democratic Europe cannot afford a third failure. And yet, I am afraid a third failure is looming.

I am not only referring to the caution and indecision that mark the attitudes of the developed countries of Western Europe towards the post-communist countries. I am referring chiefly to their response to events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the whole of former Yugoslavia. The peace talks ought to come up with a comprehensive defence of precisely those values on which the future Europe should stand - that is, the values of a civic society based on the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups and cultures. Instead they are, more and more blatantly, an occasion to argue over new borders between ethnically purified mini-States, as defined by the outcome of clashes between illegal armies. An internationally recognised multinational State is being subdivided according to the dictates of fanatical warlords.

Regardless of how well intentioned, such behaviour means sanctifying the idea of the 'ethnically pure State' and giving up on the idea of the civic society. We are cutting off the very branch we are sitting on." (*The Australian*, Nov. 11, 1993).

"A DEMON IS UNLEASHED. Tribal warfare returns with a vengeance as Tutsi and Hutu battle for power... They lie in an old gas station, a dozen charred bodies sprawled on the concrete, their clothes burned off, limbs twisted in death. The bodies of teenage boys have been lying exposed since the week before, when they were herded out of their village school and set ablaze. So far, no one has dared to bury the dead.

The young boys of Kibimba were killed for one reason: they belonged to the Tutsi tribe in a land where ethnicity has become a fatal curse. Since members of the predominantly Tutsi military killed the country's first ever Hutu President last month, Burundi's two main ethnic groups have been killing each other by the thousands." (*Time*, Nov. 15, 1993).

"MASSACRE OF TUTSIS GENOCIDE SAYS UN. GOVERNMENT troops bombarded rebel headquarters in the Rwandan capital of Kigali yesterday as United Nations and aid officials said weeks of slaughter amounted to a campaign of genocide. Hundreds of thousands of Rwandans faced starvation and piles of rotting corpses fouled water supplies in Kigali, threatening a double disaster for survivors of civil war and the butchery. The British aid agency Oxfam said up to half a million Tutsis were missing and the number of killings might well be much larger than suspected" (*The Weekend Australian*, April 30-May 1, 1994).

"ORPHANS 'MADE BIG EYES' AT DEADLY MOTHERS. MUSHA, RWANDA: Juliana Mukankawaya is the mother of six children and the murderer of two, the son and daughter of people she had known since she was a child. Last week, Mukankawaya said, she and other women rounded up the children of fellow villagers they perceived as enemies. With gruesome resolve, they bludgeoned the stunned children to death with large sticks. 'They didn't cry because they knew us,' Mukankawaya said. 'They just made big eyes. We killed too many to count.'

Wearing a black shawl and a blank expression, the slightly built 35-year-old said she was doing the children a favour, since they were now orphans who faced a hard life. Their fathers had been butchered with machetes and their mothers had been taken away to be raped and killed...

'People who would carry out such massacres, especially against children, are less than animals,' said Tito Rutaremara, 49, a former party coordinator and leading political influence in the rebel movement. 'You have to teach people to forgive and forget. It's like the Nazis. Most people were behind the Nazis but you can't punish all the people.'" (*The Australian*, May 17, 1994).

"HUMAN SACRIFICE TO THE SOCIAL ORDER. The Great European War did not end almost 75 years ago at 11 o'clock in the morning of November 11, 1918. Rather, that was the moment when an armistice came into force along the Western Front. Consequent armed conflicts continued between nations well into the 1920s. War-induced revolutions flared in many countries for just as long. In order to suppress or support such uprisings, nations invaded each other...

Equally, the Great War did not begin in the summer of 1914, neither at Sarajevo with the assassination of the Austrian archduke, nor when the British ultimatum to Germany expired. The origin of that conflict went back well into the final third of the 19th century with its scramble for markets. Hence, one key to interpreting the 20th century can be offered without hesitation: the 20th century has been a second 100 years' war. We have only just escaped from a 25-year era during which we could never be sure whether our governments would avoid global nuclear annihilation. We are lucky that anyone is alive to write the history of this century." (*The Weekend Australian*, Nov. 6-7, 1993).

"UN DESPAIR. SOMEONE who visited the United Nations headquarters last January would not recognise it today. A year ago, the UN's Manhattan complex bustled with unprecedented activity and the all-powerful Security Council met daily to dispense peace and order around the world from Bosnia to Somalia to Mozambique. Today the UN's narrow corridors are strangely empty. And the giant world body bureaucracy, discredited by the impotence of its peace-making efforts, has reverted to its habitual lethargy. Almost everywhere around the globe the UN's intervention - on which so many hopes had been pinned in 1993 - produced little more than disappointment...

It's not that the UN is no good. But the Security Council is just an instrument of the big powers and these powers had very little resolve to act,' a UN diplomat said. 'Even that mild UN weapon, the economic sanction, was used only when it did not harm to the interests of the big powers,' diplomats said. UN sanctions against Yugoslavia, for example, were tightened this year and the Security Council coldly ignored objections from such neighbouring nations as Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine, whose economies lost hundreds of millions of dollars to the Danube blockade and the breakdown of trade with Belgrade. But this year's UN embargo on Libya, on the other hand, pointedly excluded Tripoli's single largest foreign currency earner, the oil industry - because cutting off Libyan oil would have damaged western European economies." (*The Weekend Australian*, Jan. 1-2, 1994).

THE ENVIRONMENT

"OZONE ALARM. BANGKOK: The ozone layer has reached "alarming" levels of destruction, despite six years of conservation efforts, and faces further attack from massive amounts of destructive gases, the executive director of the United Nations Environment Program, Ms Elizabeth Dowdeswell, has warned an international conference on the problem." (*SMH*, Nov. 19, 1993).

"WE'RE GETTING HOTTER AT NIGHT. If you suspect you have been sweltering through too many hot nights lately, you may be right. Climatologists have found that global warming appears to have caused the nights to heat up three times faster than the days during the past 40 years. The director of the Climatic Impacts Centre at Macquarie University, Professor Ann Henderson-Sellers, said international research into global warming has discovered that the difference between day and night temperatures is shrinking." (*SMH*, Nov. 9, 1993).

"THE FIRST PROOF: OUR WEATHER'S GONE MAD. Australian climate researchers believe they have found the first sure sign that the warming of the planet is having an effect on extreme weather events, but it is a surprising one - the world is having fewer severe frosts. Scientists now have no doubt that the world has been getting slowly warmer recently and many forecast that if this continues as expected due to the greenhouse effects, events such as floods, droughts and cyclones will increase or become severe...

The new findings by the Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre, in Melbourne, that frosts have gradually declined over the past 40 years fits that pattern. Major cities are already known to have fewer frosts than rural areas, because they create 'heat islands' that tend to keep overnight minimum temperatures a little above normal.

Although a full global analysis will not be available until the end of the year, the centre's studies so far show that this trend is also affecting non-urban areas in many countries...

The environmental group Greenpeace found evidence that since 1990 'the number of extreme weather events is increasing dramatically'. The Group cites 500 reports of such events and related incidents around the world - including the January bushfires in eastern Australia, ocean warming in the Pacific and the coral reef bleaching in Tahiti - as 'real evidence that climate change has begun and the effects are already being felt.'" (*SMH*, June 2, 1994).

"TO WEATHER MISFORTUNE THE AMERICAN WAY. Americans delight in telling foreigners that, as far as their weather goes, 'everything's upside down at the moment'; it seems to have been upside down, however, for the entire three years I've lived here, said John Lyons. But for a weather-obsessed people, recent months have given Americans legitimate reason for their fixation: fires, mudslides, cyclones, blizzards and, in the past fortnight, the coldest snap this century." (*The Australian*, Jan. 28, 1994).

"GRASSLAND DECLINE THREATENS DISASTER. The world has less than 10 years to take action to prevent the widespread devastation of one of its primary food-production systems, leading international scientists warned yesterday. Grasslands and rangelands extending over half the Earth's land area are being degraded and destroyed at a frightening rate, according to speakers at the International Grasslands Congress. Their loss not only threatened global food and economic security but would also cause large-scale displacement of populations and the extinction of many kinds of useful animal and plant species...

'We must look after our grasslands because they are a heritage to humanity. If we lose them, there will be nothing, absolutely nothing left,' said FAO's Dr Fernando Rivers. Genetic erosion, the loss of potentially valuable food and forage plants from grasslands was a problem of world concern, Dr Rainer Schultze-Kraft of Hohenheim University, Germany, said.' (*The Weekend Australian*, Feb.13-14, 1993).

"WATER CRISIS. NORDWIJK, Netherlands: The world is running out of clean water, a crisis that demands international action, a conference was told on Monday - the United Nations World Water Day. Delegates from about 80 countries were attending the first global ministerial conference on water and sanitation." (*SMH*, Mar. 24, 1994).

"BEARS DRIVEN BY HUNGER. TOKYO: Starving wild bears foraging for food have been attacking villagers in rural Japan as the worst harvest since World War II wreaks havoc on the country's wildlife. The bears usually eat wild acorns and chestnuts at this time of the year, before hibernating, but the coldest and wettest summer in 48 years - on top of encroachment by civilisation - has resulted in too little food to go round. Bears are not the only creatures suffering from the failure of the harvest, which in parts of the country has seen two-thirds of the staple rice crop destroyed and a drastic reduction in yields of fruit and vegetables. Wild pigs and monkeys in unprecedented numbers are also raiding farms and orchards. And bird-lovers in Fukushima prefecture, where thousands of swans rest during their autumn migration from Siberia to South-East Asia, have appealed for donations to feed the great white birds. The paddocks where they forage are bare." (*SMH*, Nov. 23, 1993).

"MICE BRING A PLAGUE ON ALL THEIR FARMS. The plague of mice that ravaged South Australian and Victorian farms last year is raging again - only this time it has shifted north, into the rich fruit-growing areas along the Murray River and into New South Wales, where as much as 10% of the corn, soybean and rice crops has already been destroyed. It will be weeks before officials can total the current damage, but last year's infestation - said to have been the worst since 1917 - cost growers at least \$100 million. Had it not been for a massive poisoning campaign using more than 110 tons of strychnine, those losses would have doubled, according to Ron Sinclair, a senior research officer with the South Australian Department of Primary Industry, who oversaw the state's eradication program. 'That \$100 million is for cereal crops alone,' says Sinclair. 'It doesn't take into account the losses to piggeries and poultry farms, stock losses because the mice ate all the feed, and equipment damage. Unfortunately, this year's mouse onslaught is only just beginning. Winter wheat has not yet been sown and the fruit harvest is still in full swing, but already farmers around Loxton are predicting huge losses.'" (*Time*, May 2, 1994).

"DROUGHT HITS FARMS. DROUGHT has started to creep back into NSW, with 15 per cent of the State drought-declared for May, up from 11pc in April. The north of the State remains the worst affected. Already lack of rain in that area has severely affected cotton production. It now looks like affecting winter growth as well. That would mean a difficult winter for cattle and sheep producers." (*The Sun-Herald*, May 1, 1994).

"DUST DISASTER TO COST HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS. The massive wind storm that has blown millions of tonnes of dust across south-eastern Australia this week was a natural disaster, which could cost grain growers hundreds of millions of dollars, a senior CSIRO scientist has warned. 'The estimated lost production value runs to perhaps 10 per cent of the value of the crops.' Dr Michael Raupach, an environmental scientist, said. Grain crops grown in south-eastern Australia were worth about \$2 billion last year.

A thick cloud of dust hung over Sydney yesterday morning as gale-force winds carried more than one million tonnes of topsoil over the city. At dawn, the cloud was 500 kilometres long, 300 kilometres wide and 1.3 kilometres deep but by 11 am it had dissipated to a depth of 2.5 kilometres. A senior research officer with the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Mr John Leys, said between 1 million and 1.5 million tonnes of topsoil blew over the city, enough to fill 42 000 semi-trailers. He estimated that the dust storm in South Australia would have filled 600 000 semi-trailers, enough to form a line from Sydney to London.

Farmers have already had to delay crop planting because of dry conditions and now fear a drought. 'It's a combination of strong winds, both north-westerly and westerlies, with warm and dry conditions which make the surface of the soil friable and easy to lift off and the fact this has occurred just before sowing time, when a lot of farmers have their fields open and exposed and ready to sow,' Dr Raupach said. 'The other factor

that has aggravated the situation is that some farmers have been burning off stubble, because of the mouse plagues in north-western Victoria. The combination has left us pretty vulnerable." (SMH, May 27, 1994)

"FISHED OUT. ENVIRONMENT: The world's oceans are cluttered with vessels on the prowl for an ever-diminishing catch. Will the days of full nets ever return? The global fleet grew 30 percent by 1990, to 15 million fishermen with 23 million tons of boats and gear - or twice as much 'fishing power' as the world's major fish stocks can sustain, according to the United Nations. The result: the world catch rose every year until 1990, when it hit a plateau at about 98 million tons and began to drop as more and more fish stocks started to collapse. Now 60 percent of the commercial fish stocks tracked by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation are either in decline or on the verge of decline. An increasing share of the global catch is made up of fish once considered junk, as the most valuable stocks - from Atlantic cod to blue-fin tuna and Indian Ocean shrimp - are fished out. 'We think it's gotten out of control,' says Caddy of the UNFAO. 'There's no place in the world now where stocks aren't in trouble.' (The Bulletin with Newsweek, April 26, 1994).

1990 seems to have been a crucial year in many respects. The weather changed drastically and the environment started deteriorating rapidly. The Christian Herald made its appearance and the Gospel of the Kingdom of God began to be proclaimed to the leaders of all nations.

"ASIA AN ENVIRONMENTAL TIME BOMB: WORLD BANK. BANGKOK: Asia's high economic growth and 'alarming environmental degradation' are extracting a mounting toll of death and sickness and represent one of the 'greatest development challenges' in the world today, according to the World Bank. While the East Asian economies are doubling every 10 years or so, pollution, energy use and the number of vehicles on the road are increasing by factors of five, eight and even 10. The level of pollution was now many times greater than the environment's capacity to absorb it all." (The Australian, Dec. 6, 1993).

"A PLACE FOR HUMANS ON THE SPACESHIP EARTH. Some zealots suggest that there is no place for humans on the earth. But Barry Maley argues our presence is a great boon for the environment. .. We now have a great deal of disturbing evidence of the environmental devastation that follows the absence of firm, clear property rights and incentives to care for land and the environment... Russia daily spills *four times* the amount of oil released in the Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska. In East Germany, pollution has destroyed 9 per cent of agricultural land. The Polish Academy of Sciences estimates that a third of the country's population lives in areas of ecological disaster. Hungarian authorities believe one death in every 17 is caused by air pollution. The countries with the greatest control over their economies have been proven to be the world's worst environment vandals and polluters. A similar mixture of tyranny and weak property rights exacerbated by grinding poverty drives much of the undeveloped world to 'the tragedy of the commons' and environmental exploitation. Environmental protection is quickly sacrificed when starvation and penury threaten." (Sydney Morning Herald, July 13, 1993).

"THE NUMBER CRUNCH. In a major statement last year, nearly 1 600 of the world's leading scientists, most of them Nobel laureates, warned that there might be a few decades at most before the chance to avert threats to the globe were lost forever, leaving the prospects for humanity 'immeasurably diminished'. With the United Nations predicting the world's population will nearly treble to 14 billion before it stabilises, the scientists warned: 'No nation can escape from conflicts over increasingly scarce resources.'" (SMH, Sept. 18, 1993).

"CRISIS IS FORECAST UNLESS BIRTHS CUT. SAN FRANCISCO: Overpopulation threatens to become a global crisis unless drastic action to cut birth rates dramatically begins now, the American Association for the Advancement of Science has been told. World population is nearly 4 billion more than the 2 billion the planet can comfortably sustain, according to an ecological study of natural resources to be published later this year. Fertile soil for growing crops, unpolluted water, fossil fuels and the flora and fauna on which humanity depends were all being depleted at a rate which would lead to catastrophic natural, social and political disasters by the end of the next century, a leading ecologist told the meeting yesterday. Professor David Pimentel, Professor of Ecology at Cornell University at Ithaca, New York, released the results of a year-long study into the optimum human population: the number of people the planet could comfortably support with a reasonable standard of living for all. The study concluded that the present population of 5.6 billion would have to shrink to 2 billion. However, the projected population for 2100 is expected to be between 12 billion and 15 billion.

Professor Pimentel acknowledged that drastic adjustments to cut the population to 2 billion would cause serious difficulties. 'But continued rapid population growth will result in even more severe, social, economic and political conflicts plus catastrophic public health and environmental problems.' One of the main findings of the Cornell study was that soil erosion was more intense than ever. It takes about 500 years for 25 millimetres of top soil to form, yet intensive farming is leading to topsoil being lost between 20 and 40 times faster than it is being replaced.

The study found that global food production, which had increased over the past few decades, would fall by about 20 per cent over the next 25 years. Freshwater supplies would come under increasing strain, with demand expected to double because of a 20 per cent increase in human numbers. The study predicts that fossil fuels will be all but depleted within the next century. It also finds that the world is losing 150 species of animals and plants a day because of human activities. This threatens the 500,000 species of animals, plants and microbes that carry out essential functions for humans, such as crop pollination and purifying water and soil. The ecologists said: 'To do nothing to control population numbers is to condemn future humans to a lifetime of absolute poverty, suffering, starvation, disease and associated violent conflicts.'" (SMH, Feb. 23, 1994).

"WORLD POPULATION GROWTH EXPLODING. JOHN McRobert urges us (Letters to the editor, 17/5) to ignore scientific opinion regarding exponential population growth and our environment. If Mr McRobert does not believe the environmental scientists who spoke at the Australian Academy of Science on limits to Australia's population, perhaps he will believe the 100 Nobel laureates who signed the Warning to Humanity in November 1992, which said the world faces ecological catastrophe and social break-down if current trends in population growth and consumption are not reversed... "What Mr McRobert and so many others who dismiss worries about population numbers don't realise is that humanity has never existed in global plague proportions before and our population never multiplied at such an extraordinary rate. Exponential growth now means that the world population is literally on a juggernaut course; global population is doubling several times within a human lifetime. The numbers of humans involved present a problem that none of us have ever faced before. We should thank God, or scientists, or just dumb luck, that with contraception and modern education there is still a way out - and use it! Sheila Newman, Victorian President Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population, Melbourne. (The Australian, May 23, 1994).

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

"GUTNICK EYES DIAMOND FLOAT. Mr Joe Gutnick is considering spinning off a separate diamond exploration company from Great Central Mines to continue efforts to fulfil the prophecies of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson... Brokers believe it would be logical and beneficial for Great Central to float off its diamond interests to become a pure gold play. Its diamond leases are concentrated in the Greater Nabby region in WA, where Mr Gutnick hoped to make a commercial diamond discovery by September to fulfil a prophecy made by Rabbi Schneerson in New York." (SMH, Dec. 14, 1993).

"G-7 LEADERS SPLIT OVER UNEMPLOYMENT. Leaders of the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations yesterday warned of the need for urgent action to head off worsening world unemployment, with President Clinton saying the United States had an unemployment system 10 years out of date and Germany predicting three million of its workers would lose their jobs in the next eight years. At the G-7 jobs summit in Detroit, Japan also admitted it needed to make sweeping changes to its economic structure, including abandoning its "lifetime employment" practices and shelving its education philosophy, which it said encouraged conformism rather than creativity." (*The Australian*, March 16, 1994).

"RAP MAKES A KILLING ON HATRED. Snoop Doggy Dog is a strange role model for millions of American children; a convicted drug pusher who is accused of murder. Yet he is the fastest rising star in the American music world.

'He is the excrescence of gangsta rap - the glorification of ghetto violence and degradation of black women that is sweeping young black America... This negative message of destruction and denigration of life has got to stop,' says Nathan McCall, a black writer who is spearheading the initiative for change. "It is having a corrosive effect on young black Americans who hold these rappers up as heroes. Their songs are overwhelming the power of parents, teachers and other figures of authority. But black parents, politicians and intellectuals are sick of rap's glorification of ghetto violence and the degrading depiction of black women as 'bitches and hos (whores)'.

For many, the last straw was the arrest of Tupac Shakur, another successful rapper. Three weeks ago he was accused of shooting two off-duty police officers. Last week he was charged with a sex attack on a woman. His music is the target of a lawsuit brought by the widow of a police officer shot dead by a young hoodlum listening on his car radio to a Shakur song that encouraged cop killing: 'What the **** would you do? Drop them or let them drop you? I choose dropping the cop.' Controversy is not new to rap. It first made headlines with its anti-police messages by singers such as Ice-T, sang about 'dusting off some cops' with a chorus of 'die, die, die, pig, die'. Ice Cube taunted Korean shopkeepers with 'don't follow me up and down your market/ Or your little chop suey ass will be a target'. What is new is rap's destructive attitude towards blacks by blacks. 'Rat-a-tat and a tat like that/ Never hesitate to put a nigga on his back,' sings Dr Dre, Dogg's producer. McCall says such violent sentiments are 'a shock to the black community, because we understand how to react to forces outside the black community. The puzzling thing now it is all from within. Many people just do not know what to do.' (*The Australian*, Dec. 9, 1993).

"THE US - VIOLENCE, VIOLENCE, VIOLENCE... Americans barricade themselves into their homes as crime spreads into towns and public sanctuaries... Bingeing on a diet of local news stories that graphically depict crime invading once safe ports - schools, restaurants, courthouses, homes, libraries - Americans are rapidly coming to regard the summer of '93 as a season in hell... The epidemic of shooting sprees in malls, McDonald's restaurants and movie theatres has fostered the perception that almost no place is safe anymore. Fear has led to a boom in the security industry and the transformation of homes and public places into fortresses." (*Time*, Aug. 23, 1993).

"SICK WESTERN CULTURE LOSES ITS APPETITE FOR DECENCY. The West won the Cold War without a missile fired in anger, a great military victory. Western economic culture based on secure, exchangeable property rights and the market has been copied with outstanding success by the high-growth economies of East Asia and is now being emulated with surprising speed in most of Latin America, eastern Europe and mainland Asia. English is the predominate language in international trade and technical literature. Democracy, a Western idea, is at least paid lip service in most of the world. Even Western music, architecture and visual arts have acquired a following in most non-Western countries. And yet, throughout the West, there is a profound cultural and social malaise. Western society is rotting at the core.

Throughout the West, crime rates are high and rising. Politics and commerce are plagued by scandal. Unemployment and child neglect are serious and apparently getting worse. Western citizens, far from displaying healthy self-reliance, concentrate on finding somebody to blame (and, if possible, sue) for life's misfortunes. Citizens of the West worry endlessly about ingesting or inhaling minor poisons and quake before such shadows as global warming, ozone holes, cholesterol and AIDS. The most fundamental unit in every successful society, the family, is breaking down in the West, battered by sexual hedonism that is not just accepted but fashionable. The notion that right and wrong are matters of mere opinion has captured the minds of Western elites. In short, the West's own elites have lost confidence in the culture that has been so singularly successful. Their culture and morals are, to them, now matters of mere taste.

Contrast attitudes during the 1930's depression when United States president Franklin D. Roosevelt said: 'our difficulties, thank God, concern only material things.' Today, Americans have more material things than any people ever before but their gross domestic product includes vast sums spent on prisons, suicide hot lines, drug counselling and teenage pregnancy clinics that were not needed in the 1930's.

A recent report by US community leaders, Code Blue, concluded, 'Never before have the nation's youth been less healthy, less cared for and less well prepared for life than their parents at the same age.' In the US, in about 20 years, youth suicide has increased by 300 per cent, teenage pregnancy has increased by 621 per cent (and 85 per cent of the boys who impregnate these girls abandon them and the child) and teenage homicide has increased by 232 per cent. This crisis is not economic, it is not caused by disease or slums; it is a crisis of the culture. The most common cause of suffering is now self-destructive behaviour. However, Code Blue, having diagnosed the cause of the crisis as cultural, recommended mainly healthcare." (John Hide, *The Australian*, January 14, 1994).

"THE MISSING PART OF OUR DAILY LIVES. What has become of our moral values? The conviction last November of John Venables and Robert Thompson for the murder of James Bulger sent a shudder through British society. Members of Parliament blamed the Church for not teaching right from wrong, while churchmen decried the privatisation of morality during the Thatcher years. Blaming institutions is one thing but blaming children is another. Even William Golding has not prepared us to regard children as agents of evil, so we seek in the social environment an explanation for the corruption of their innocence... When a child asks why something is wrong these days, it can be very difficult to give a satisfactory answer. The traditional ways of understanding the world that would have made conventional explanation of right and wrong intelligible no longer prevail." (Damian Grace, *SMH*, April 11, 1994).

"MORE WOMEN DRINKING. MORE women than men are recording blood-alcohol reading over the .05 limit in random breath tests of Victorian drivers. In a sample of drivers conducted on a Friday night last month on Melbourne's Tullamarine Freeway, the percentage of women drivers over the .05 limit was nearly double that of men. The Assistant Police Commissioner for the Traffic and Operations Support, Mr Graham Sinclair, said he was very concerned about the number of women who are failing blood-alcohol tests. 'We're concerned because females do not tend to drink low-alcohol drinks. It's not fashionable for them to do so because the usual drink for females is wine or spirits, where the alcohol content is virtually double, if not triple, for what it is for beer.' (*SMH*, May 6, 1994).

"CHARLES SPEAKS UP FOR SPEAKING UP. LONDON: Prince Charles yesterday called political correctness 'dogmatic arrogance' and urged people to stand up to the intimidation of fashionable thinking. 'If we do not, we shall forever live with the consequences,' the Prince of Wales told a newspaper editors' lunch. 'The misnamed fashion for what people call political correctness amounts to testing everything, every aspect of society, against a predetermined, pre-ordained view,' said the Prince, whose views are sometimes far from fashionable.

He said opponents were intimidated into not disagreeing for fear of being thought old-fashioned or reactionary. 'The intimidation is palpable,' he said. 'Any questioning, in a perfectly polite way, of the current fashions, usually elicits a vitriolic response - whether it is a wish to teach people the basic principles of English grammar... or suggesting that in certain circumstances, it may be necessary and sensible to administer a smack to a child.'

'All around us we see the evidence, day after day, of the short-lived theories and fashions which undermine our individuality, undermine our confidence. I believe we do not have to accept these fashionable distortions, just as we no longer need to accept that people have to live in a brutalised urban landscape' - an apparent reference to the modern city architecture he loathes." (SMH, May 6, 1994).

Prince Charles could have quoted the following Scriptures to support his arguments, but that would not have been politically correct:
"Correct your child and he will give you rest; Yes, he will give delight to your soul."
"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother." (Proverbs 29: 17, 15) Ed.

"I THINK, THEREFORE I THINK. Post-structuralism, deconstruction, semiotics - the convoluted baggage of the French theorists Derrida, Foucault and Barthes has a stranglehold on the humanities and the great liberal humanist tradition. The results are calamitous for our universities, and worse for our minds, writes Luke Slattery. Humanities - a broad canopy covering fields as various as history and linguistics, fine arts and philosophy - is perhaps the most anguished of intellectual pursuits. Its popularity among students masks what many academics privately acknowledge: the discipline is deeply troubled. As academics under the influence of faddish critical theories retreat into a fog of jargon, they find they have burnt their bridges to the public. 'Many think if the public can understand what they do,' says one critic, 'there must be something wrong.'

For at least a century, the discipline has been moored in the liberal humanist tradition. But no longer. Many intellectuals believe, and teach, that there is no such thing as truth or knowledge. The individual is 'constructed' by language; he or she is merely a 'site of discourse;... An older, Socratic tradition, which held firm to unfashionable concepts such as knowledge and truth, is being lost. Have the humanities, then, abandoned all pretence to moral purpose?

At a time when the humanities need allies in the community, the government, and the media, 'Theory' has induced the intellectuals to turn inwards. It has become almost impossible for the extreme fringe of the humanities to justify what it does, or to promote itself in a credible way. Says Dr Seumas Miller, a reader at Melbourne University: 'If you take their anti-truth and anti-knowledge to its ultimate conclusion, you have to ask, "What the hell are you people being paid to do?"' (The Weekend Australian, May 15-16, 1993).

"BACK TO THE DARWIN ERA. JUST think. The giant tortoises threatened being barbecued on one of the Galapagos Islands are up to 200 years old. Some of them could have cast their beady eyes over Charles Darwin when he conducted his scientific survey in 1835.

Darwin's two-storey house, in the village of Downe in Kent where the great man lived from 1842 until his death in 1882, is kept in its near-original condition by the loving care of curators funded by the Natural History Museum. You can stand in the old study where the inspired naturalist and founder of scientific evolutionary biology wrote his liberating work *The Origin Of Species*.

Before Darwin, the ruling view of human history in Western, Christian society was based on the mythology of the Old Testament's Book of Genesis, namely that a solitary supreme being, God, created the earth and everything on it in six days and rested on the Sabbath. Adam and Eve were mother and father [he means father and mother, Ed.] to the whole humanity. After his five-year, round-the-world voyage on the Beagle - he landed in Sydney on January 12, 1836 - Darwin demolished the metaphysical conception of nature. He showed that the wonders of the natural environment and all living species, including human beings, were the result of the process of evolution over millions of years. At a stroke, he set human minds free from the notion of a divine, omnipotent power which governed natural existence. In its place he gave us the emancipating vision of nature as an interconnected whole which moved, changed, formed and reformed as an eternal process. Appropriately, he is buried in Westminster Abbey alongside Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), the scientific giant who gave us the theory of gravitation, calculus, a reflecting telescope, microscope and sextant." (The Sun-Herald, May 1, 1994).

The great news for the people of God, who have been vexed by such insidious opinions that pass as "scientific emancipation", is that our Creator God is about to enter human "evolution" and show humanity that the Old Testament's Book of Genesis is not "mythology".

I can hardly bear to watch another television program or read another book telling us that the world is the product of millions of years of blind evolution and that we are descending from apes. In spite of the fact that scientists of repute, many former evolutionists, have proven beyond doubt that Darwin's "liberating work The Origin Of Species" was never more than an unfounded theory, it continues to be the linchpin of biological studies in our educational institutions.

Fulfilled prophecy is the proof which should have buried this fallacy long ago, but forces of darkness have kept it alive for their own insidious purposes. However, God's saving plan for humanity will not be wrecked, and Satan and his cohorts will soon reap the rewards of their own deception. Ed.

HEALTH

"ANTIBIOTICS: THE END OF MIRACLES? WARNING: No longer effective against killer bugs. The End of Antibiotics: Science thought it had vanquished infectious diseases. But now the bugs are fighting back... 'The perception [in the 1980s] was that we had conquered almost every disease,' says Dr. Thomas Beam of the Buffalo, N.Y., Medical Center. Science was sure the real challenge would lie in the conquest of cancer, heart disease and other chronic ailments. Instead, 'medicine's purported triumph over infectious disease has become an illusion,' writes Dr. Shewen Nuland in his best-selling *How We Die*. ...The rise of drug resistant germs is 'unparalleled in recorded biologic history. Americans like quick fixes. When a doctor doesn't prescribe an antibiotic, they look for one who will... Antibiotics sales have soared in recent years, but the drugs that doctors prescribe are often inappropriate... From overprescribing to satisfying patients who complain too much, Doctors are now part of the antibiotic problem... Without antibiotics, Doctors tried all sorts of harebrained cures. They also treated patients as people, not as diseases." (The Bulletin with Newsweek, April 19, 1994).

"AN ALPHABET SCOURGE. New hepatitis viruses threaten the public - and surprise science. AIDS dominates the headlines and research funding, but Stephen Locarnini worries about another viral menace... viral hepatitis is on the rise in Western nations and in Australia it may already rival HIV as a public health problem... Homosexuals have the highest rate of hepatitis B infection, while intravenous drug users are more at risk from hepatitis C. But in an era of fast food and overseas travel, Locarnini warns that the risk to the general population is from hepatitis A and E. Food handled by somebody with poor personal hygiene, or a raw oyster contaminated by a sewage spill, can cause hepatitis A or E. A recent survey by the drug company Smith Kline Beecham indicated that 70% of Australian travellers are visiting areas where hepatitis is endemic. A sip of the local water almost anywhere in Asia and in many eastern European countries can result in a debilitating bout of hepatitis A or E." (Time, Sept. 27, 1993).

"TB CAMPAIGN. THE HAGUE: The World Health Organisation has unveiled plans to save 12 million of the 30 million people who may die in the next decade from a worsening tuberculosis epidemic. It urged rich countries to provide an extra \$US100 million a year to help poor nations fight the disease." (SMH, March 31, 1994).

"AIDS BECOMING A LEADING KILLER OF WORLD'S CHILDREN. AIDS is overtaking measles and malaria as a leading killer of children, according to the 1994 report on the State of the World's Children, released today." (SMH, December 21, 1993).

"BUBONIC PLAGUE MAKES A COMEBACK. THE bubonic plague, or Black Death, that killed millions across Europe in the Middle Ages could be making a global comeback, a World Health Organisation report released yesterday says. An increasing number of cases are being reported in Africa, Asia, South America and the United States, although statistics are incomplete because of inadequate surveillance... The WHO report comes amid growing concern that scourges that ravaged humankind in the Middle Ages are returning. Illnesses such as diphtheria and tuberculosis have been increasing since 1990. WHO is also alarmed by the spread of tuberculosis, which it calls 'a global health crisis' and 'humanity's greatest killer'. Malnutrition and poor health, as well as the proliferation of AIDS, have been blamed for the disease's rapid rise." (*The Australian*, March 4, 1994).

"GLOBAL SPREAD OF MUTANT BUGS. LONDON: The spread of flesh-eating infection, which has killed more than a hundred people around the world this year, is part of a worldwide epidemic of bacterial disease. Experts from 11 countries who met in Geneva last week have established an increase in deaths from infections previously conquered by modern medicine... Evidence of a new strain of streptococcus from America is being investigated by bacteriology Professor Hugh Pennington, of Aberdeen University, who said: 'It is likely that an increase in serious infections is due to mutations.' (*The Australian*, May 30, 1994).

"RUSSIANS CREATING PLAGUE. Russia is secretly engaged in a program to develop biological weapons, including a new 'superplague' for which there is no antidote in the West... President Yeltsin promised President Bush that the program had been closed two years ago. He repeated that assurance when he met President Clinton in Vancouver last year. But evidence from three defectors has supplied proof that the program is still going ahead under the control of the Russian defence ministry." (*The Australian*, March 28, 1994).

"THE BRAVE NEW WORLD IS A MORAL MINEFIELD. Scientists claim to have located genes which determine predisposition to homosexuality, aggression and alcoholism. Such knowledge poses terrible new questions for the medical profession, writes Richard Yu in his Bongiorno Medical Award-winning essay.

The recent isolation of a gene associated with a predisposition towards homosexuality in some men highlights the ethical perils of active eugenics. Fears have already been voiced about the possibility of pre-natal tests for such a 'gay gene' being carried to determine whether a foetus is to be aborted or not. What must be questioned here is the ethical right of any human being to terminate another life on the basis of a narrowly defined and highly personal moral code." (*SMH*, October 25, 1993).

RELIGION

"RELIGION SEEPS BACK INTO ROCK. Bob Dylan and the Beatles sang out for love and peace, but never have the airways been so overloaded with spiritual callings, Guy Garcia reports. Why is faith suddenly so fashionable again? Part of the answer seems to lie in the increasing ephemeral nature of modern life. In an age when cultural fads are gobbled up and dispensed within nanoseconds, the timeless verities of good and evil speak with new authority... For Bob Dylan, God remains a given from which he delves into deeper questions about the human condition. In late 1970s, he converted from Judaism to Christianity and released such 'born again' albums as *Slow Train Coming*, *Saved* and *Shot of Love*. Dylan, who these days prefers not to discuss his religious affiliation, maintains, 'People are lost because they can believe anything.' In a recent interview, he said: 'A person without faith is like a walking corpse.' (*SMH*, Dec. 30, 1993).

"THE CHURCH VERSUS CHRISTMAS. Modern Christmas celebrations fill churches with 'seasonals' - once-a-year believers - expecting to be comforted by syrupy, sentimental 'Days Of Our Lives' sermons that imprison Jesus forever as a baby in the manger.

The most significant religious event at Christmas for most Australians could be a pop singer - watched by millions on television - leading a vast choir singing carols by candlelight at Myer Music Bowl. Yet the same crowd would feel distinctly uncomfortable singing those songs in a church, an expression of the alienation of the church from rank-in-file Australians...

Lindenmayer - a Uniting Church minister - recommends the church vacate Christmas. 'There is nothing sacrosanct or special about December 25. We don't know the date of Christ's birthday,' he says. 'December 25 was a great pagan feast day which Christianity adopted to fall in with Constantine, the first Christian emperor. If that choice was a pragmatic political decision, then in the late 20th century the pragmatists should recognise the retail industry is the engine which now drives Christmas. In our secular society the celebration of Christmas is often no more than what is termed an end-of-the-year piss-up.'

...NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission chairman Stephen Kerkyasharian suggests cautiously that commercialism has made a good contribution to Christmas. 'It might not be the right thing to say but Christmas commerce binds people of all religions into a family festive season,' he says. 'It has created an environment where everyone wants to participate. I'm Armenian myself and the Armenian Apostolic Church's Christmas is December 6. The Orthodox Church - with the exception of the Greek Orthodox who now go with January 25 - celebrate on January 7. Muslims do not celebrate Christmas but their New Year is the same as our New Year. It's a festive season for everyone, not just Christians.' (*The Australian*, December 24, 1993).

"SANTA: WARM FANTASY OR NOSY STRANGER? ...A lot of parents use Father Christmas, saying their children won't get any presents unless they are good," Wheatley [a consultant on Montessori education] says. "But father Christmas always does come. As a method of controlling children, it just doesn't work. All they learn is that grown-ups tell them lies."

"Lisa Thompson, an otherwise robust five-year-old, has developed a morbid fear of bearded men, in reaction to being thrust upon successive Santas. Even pictures of him send Lisa into tears. I think we'll play it down when Christmas Eve comes around." This charade is all too much for Helen Wheatley. "We tell children they must not take gifts from strangers, then suddenly they have to sit on this man's knee and accept a present from him. Think of the fear that involves."

"Not having Father Christmas has made no difference to us whatsoever. My children have said they won't be passing on the pretence of Father Christmas to their kids." (*SMH*, Dec. 15, 1993).

"STEALING FOOD IS ALL RIGHT: PARSON. WELINGTON: A Methodist minister who said theft by poor people who needed food could be justified, stood by his comments. The Rev Brian Turner, a Wellington mission superintendent, compared New Zealand to feudal England, where the poor were forced to steal. He told reporters that people using food banks set up to provide food to the needy had confided that they would steal as a last resort. Requests to food banks for help had soared since sweeping cuts to welfare payments were made in 1991. The Social Welfare Minister, Mr Peter Gresham, said he would not describe Mr Turner's comments as irresponsible. "But it is dangerous to suggest there are justifiable grounds for stealing." Owners of businesses had to be considered. "Is it right they should be looked upon as possible targets? Is it fair to open shops to wholesale pillaging?" (*SMH*, Dec. 21, 1993).

"CHICAGO'S COSMIC CONCLAVE. The event was billed as "History's Greatest Gathering of Religious Leaders," though one Buddhist monk grumbled that it was more like a grab-bag 'supermarket of religion.' For eight days, 7000 representatives of hundreds of faiths - from

Taoism, from Zoroastrianism to feminist goddess worship - mingled, argued and earnestly exchanged views at Chicago's Palmer House Hilton Hotel. The Parliament of the World's Religions, the first such gathering in 100 years, was convened to "create for our time a new conversation," said the Rev. David Ramage, parliament chairman and a local Presbyterian minister...

Even after a century's wait, no gathering of all the world's religions would be complete without a little friction. A session on displaced religious minorities was disrupted by screaming fights. Police had to separate fist-shaking, turbaned Sikhs and enraged, orange-robed Hindus battling over their bloody Indian history. Even mild-mannered Buddhists grew testy, complaining that speakers had referred to a belief in God, a concept alien to their faith. Orthodox Christians left after learning that witches and neo-pagan religions were represented, and four Jewish groups withdrew their sponsorship to protest the presence of Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan." (*Time*, Sept. 13, 1993).

"THAILAND: ACCUSATIONS SUGGEST MONK'S DEVOTIONS WERE NOT WHOLLY HOLY. Sex scandals are not new in male dominated Thailand but Bangkok newspapers are in a feeding frenzy, seizing on every sordid detail of the exploits of one of the country's best-known monks. A furore over the behaviour of Phra Yantra Amaro Bhikky, a 43-year-old jet-setting preacher, has scandalised the monkhood and raised doubts about the ability of modern monks to adhere to the 227 edicts laid-down by Lord Buddha 2500 years ago. A 38-year-old Cambodian nun, Kaewta Mongchinda, said she and Phra Yantra had sex on the deck of a ferry during a trip to Scandinavia last year. As people started to question the sincerity of Phra Yantra's celibacy vow, former devotees came forward with tales of other sexual transgressions and un-monk-like behaviour. A woman said Phra Yantra fathered her six-year-old daughter in Belgrade. A harpist said she and the monk made love in the back of a her van during a trip to Europe.

Amid calls by some monks for him to resign the monkhood, Phra Yantra is attempting to tough out the scandal. He denies any wrongdoing. "I think they should be punished in the deepest hell," he said of his accusers.

As the controversy intensified, Phra Yantra's zealous supporters threatened journalists writing the story. It wouldn't have been possible for Phra Yantra to have sex with the woman on the deck of a ferry in Scandinavia," said a senior monk. It's impossible to have an erection in the extremely cold weather.

As the controversy has raged, focussing attention on the monkhood, some monks have made some remarkably frank admissions about how they deal with temptation. One told the "Bangkok Post" newspaper that "corpse contemplation" was one of 80 meditation techniques to surmount lust. Another said "wet dreams are constant reminders of men's nature". Still another complained of the ever-increasing difficulty of being a monk in a society sometimes accused of decadence. "If we lower our eyes, we cannot see the cluttered way," he said. If we look up, there is the advertisement for women's underpants.

The Thai Government, alarmed at the rate of lapses of the shaven-headed saffron set, last year set-up a 200-member monk police force.

The Phra Yantra scandal is not first to focus debate on the monkhood. One monk was caught having sex with a corpse during funeral rites, according to Thai newspapers." (*SMH*, April 5, 1994).

"PILGRIMS FLOCK TO INDIA'S TOWERING INSPIRATION. NEW DEHLY: A reported 350 000 Indian pilgrims converged on a towering statue yesterday for a sacred and grandiose ceremony, held once every 12 years at the conjunction of heavenly bodies... The serenely smiling statue of the naked Jain ascetic at Shrvanabelagola is 18 metres tall and said to be the world's largest freestanding monolithic statue.

As devotees sang and chanted fervently from Jain scriptures, holy water from 1 008 pots was poured over the grey granite colossus yesterday. Believers had to bid to give the graven image its ritual bath with water drawn from a sacred tank nearby and from sites throughout India. The first pot was poured by Sudheer Jain, the son of a New Delhi paper merchant, who offered almost \$50 000 for the honour." (*SMH*, Dec. 21, 1993).

"THE CUTTING EDGE - LET HER DIE. Every day 3000 female foetuses are aborted after sex determination tests... An Indian mother justifying infanticide rather than abandoning the girl to special government centres, said: "Would you give your daughter to a stranger after carrying it nine months? We would rather give seven girls to the god of death than one girl to a stranger. The sons will, in life, nurture their parents soul, and in death, he will carry on the rites necessary to reach Nirvana.

There are now 25 million more boys than girls in India." (*SBS TV*, Dec. 21, 1993).

What happened to that law of Karma which says that good deeds give one virtue, a higher state of "enlightenment" and a better plane of life in the next "reincarnation"? Ed.

"LASHING JUST THE TIP OF ICEBERG IN ISLAMIC LAW. The outcry aroused by the 80 lashes inflicted on Peter El-Birish, the Sudanese bishop accused of adultery, has highlighted the varying degrees with which Sharia, or Islamic law, is imposed in the Muslim world. Sudan, with civil war whipping up religious feelings, has been regarded as the most cruel exponent of Islamic jurisprudence since the 1989 military coup. There have been diplomatic reports of at least one crucifixion, which is the punishment for apostasy. In the town of Omdurman, a voluntary charity has been struggling to run a shelter for amputees. It was claimed yesterday that Bishop El-Birish had been framed by a teenager in a revenge plot by her family... Although these cases attract world headlines, little attention is paid to the plight of Sudan's cross-amputees - those convicted of armed robbery - who usually have a right hand and a left foot hacked off. Many die and those who do not are cast out from society, usually unable to support families.

Running close behind in the severity with which Sharia is imposed are Saudi Arabia and Iran, with Libya's Colonel Gaddafi advocating Saudi-style punishments. More moderate regimes, such as Egypt and Jordan, are facing increasing pressures from fundamentalists to follow suit... Murder and sexual immorality, such as adultery or homosexual acts, carry the death penalty in Saudi Arabia. So does apostasy. The death penalty is carried out in public, usually by decapitation. Serious theft is punished by cutting off the right hand. This, too, is done in public... Under Sharia, an adulteress is often sentenced to death by public stoning, with those taking part told not to use large rocks so death is slow." (*The Australian*, Sept. 8, 1993).

What about the adulterers? Why only the adulteresses are stoned? The Jews of Jesus' time were applying the law selectively too.

Christians may remember the case of the woman who was caught in adultery and brought before Jesus Christ to be judged. The scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" (John 8:4,5).

This is what the law actually said: "The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death" (Lev.20:10).

Jesus Christ could well have said, "where is the adulterer, this woman could not have committed adultery by herself? Your law requires that both be stoned. Why do you therefore discriminate against the women?" But He gave them a n even better answer: "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." They all walked away and left the woman standing alone.

Women's Liberation Movement seeks to free women from the current oppressive politico-religious systems. In true Christianity they have been free since the time of Jesus Christ. Ed.

"DIVORCE SENTENCE NEAR END. JERUSALEM: An 81-year-old man, sent to jail 31 years ago for refusing to grant his wife a divorce, could go free soon because he is no longer capable of saying yes, an Israeli newspaper said. The stubborn husband, Mr Yehi Eliahu, has become senile and a rabbinical judge has recommended his release, the daily *Yedioth Ahronoth* reported yesterday.

He was jailed by a rabbinical court, which handles divorce in Israel, nine years after he spurned his wife's request. Under ritual Jewish law a marriage can be ended only with the husband's consent. Rabbinical judges sometimes jail husbands for unlimited terms in an attempt to force them into agreeing to a divorce." (*SMH*, Jan. 8, 1994).

"SOME DECIDE TO TURN BACK THE CIRCUMCISION CLOCK. Some men feel their circumcision at birth was an assault. Now, they can be 'uncircumcised' without surgery, writes Cherrill Hicks.

Like many other middle-aged American men, Jim Bigelow was circumcised at birth, but he never felt happy about it. "I often prayed that God would give my foreskin back to me," he recalls. "As I got older, I tried to convince myself it was for the best. But the feelings of loss and violation never went away.

Four years ago, Dr Bigelow, now aged 60, a psychologist in California, began to "redevelop" his foreskin. He started to stretch the skin of the penile shaft over the glans, or head of the penis, keeping it in place with surgical adhesive tape. The tape was cut in such a way that he could still urinate, and it was worn constantly; when it fell off, he replaced it with another piece. It interfered with spontaneous sex, since you have to pace the sexual relationship with the day you're going to change the tape, 'he said.'" (*SMH*, Nov. 19, 1993).

"KNIVES OUT IN ISRAELI ROW OVER CORPSES. JERUSALEM: In one of the more macabre issues dividing religious and secular Jews in Israel, a dispute has arisen over the circumcision of Jewish corpses. Ultra-Orthodox Jews will not permit tampering with the bodies of the deceased; they forbid autopsies and the transplant of organs from the dead. But rabbis generally agree that removal of the foreskin may be performed even on a corpse.

The matter came to light after revelations in the daily newspaper *Ha'aretz* about practices in Haifa. The paper reported that a number of corpses of recently arrived Soviet Jews had been circumcised... Under Jewish law - Halacha - all Jews must be circumcised or 'their souls will not enter the garden of Eden', as a former Chief Rabbi, Mordecai Elliahu, put it yesterday." (*SMH*, Aug. 18, 1993).

"CHIEF RABBI CALLS ON POPE. ROME: A Pope and a Chief Rabbi of Israel met for the first time yesterday, greeted each other with shalom and after a warm conversation, parted saying "see you again in Jerusalem". The historic meeting between Pope John Paul II and the Ashkenazy Chief Rabbi, Israel Meir Lau, in the papal summer palace at Castelgandolfo, outside Rome, came as the Vatican and Israel were heading for diplomatic relations after what the Vatican admitted had been a past fraught with severe 'incomprehensions'.

Rabbi Lau, who is one of Israel's two chief rabbis (the other leads the Sephardic community), said the Pope was the first to raise the subject of a visit to Jerusalem. He said he renewed an invitation made last year by the Israeli Government and asked when the Pope would visit. "The Pope just smiled and said the time of the visit was drawing near," the rabbi added." (*SMH*, Sept. 23, 1993).

"ISRAEL AND THE VATICAN COME TO TERMS. JERUSALEM: Formally recognising each other after decades of diplomatic aloofness and centuries of frequent Jewish-Catholic rancour, Israel and the Vatican signed an agreement on Thursday to establish diplomatic relations. The signing ceremony was held in a starkly modern room of the Foreign Ministry, where Israel and the Holy See set the course for an exchange of ambassadors and possibly the first visit to the Holy Land by Pope John Paul II.

But even as it recognised Israel, the Vatican sought to defend its position in the Arab world and to register its demand for international guarantees of Jerusalem's status as a holy place for Christians, Jews and Muslims alike.

Behind the agreement, there are thousands of years of history, full of hatred, fear and ignorance, with a few islands of understanding, of co-operation and of dialogue," the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr Yossi Beilin, who signed for Israel, said. 'Behind the agreement, there are very few years of light and many more years of darkness.'

Mr Beilin said even talk of reconciliation between Jews and Catholics may be premature. 'Do we have the right to reconcile?' he asked. 'It is not for us to say. Can we ignore the memories of so many years? No. It is wrong to ignore memories, much as it is wrong to let memories tie our hands and determine our fates.'

Mr Beilin's Vatican counterpart at the ceremony, Monsignor Claudio Celli, did not utter the word reconciliation or say anything that could remotely be construed as contrition as some Israelis had demanded." (*SMH*, Jan. 1, 1994).

"ACCORD PAVES WAY FOR POPE TO VISIT ISRAEL. The Vatican and Israel launched a new era yesterday, signing an agreement to establish diplomatic relations and paving the way for the pilgrimage to the Holy Land by Pope John Paul II... The Israeli President, Mr Ezer Weizman, repeated an invitation for the Pope to visit. 'I hope soon to have the pleasure of welcoming the Pope here in Israel,' he said" (*The Weekend Australian*, Jan. 1-2, 1994).

In spite of President Weizman's hope, there will be no pleasure for the people of Israel nor for the rest of the world when that visit will take place. If you have not read our article about the "abomination of desolation", send for your free copy. Ed.

"END OF THE WORLD 'HEREBY CANCELLED. KIEV: The 'end of the world' prophesied by the Great White Brotherhood cult fizzled into anti-climax today, with only a small crowd gathering at the appointed place for 'judgment day' outside an 11th-century cathedral... A few hundred people gathered outside St Sofia Cathedral, the Orthodox Slav world's holiest church, chosen by the cult as the 'closest point to the cosmos.'" (*SMH*, Nov. 15, 1993).

"CHURCH OPENS DOOR TO FEMALES PRIESTS. LONDON: The Church of England's ruling body gave final approval yesterday to legislation allowing the ordination of women, opening the door for thousands of women to become priests. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, lauded the decision as "a moment for rejoicing in the confident expectation of the rich and diverse gifts women will bring to the priestly ministry." (*The Australian*, Feb. 24, 1994).

"BURN WOMEN PRIESTS AT STAKE, SAYS VICAR. LONDON: An Anglican vicar has called for women priests to be burned at stake as witches. The comments of Anthony Kennedy, vicar of Lutton in Lincolnshire, over the ordination of women, has split the Church of England. 'Priestesses should be burned at stake because they are assuming powers they have no right to,' he said. 'In the medieval world, that was called sorcery. The way of dealing with sorcerers was to burn them at stake. It's illegal now, but if I had my way that is what would happen to them.' A spokesman for the Bishop of Lincoln said the comments were absurd. 'He will cause hurt and offence when I felt we were way beyond this.'" (*The Daily Telegraph*, March 10, 1994).

"SECT ENSLAVES CHILDREN: JUDGE. BUENOS AIRES: A police raid on The Family religious sect had found 268 children living in cramped quarters, many of them underfed and poorly clothed, and literature promoting sex between adults and children, a judge said yesterday. The Family, or The Family of Love, originated with the Children of God, which emerged from the 1960s hippie movement in Huntington Beach, California.

Under its leader, David Berg, the Children of God preached Biblical fundamentalism. It also preached free sex among its members, even advocating the use of sex as a way to win converts. In the early 1970s, on the instructions of Mr Berg, members left the US after they had been accused by the New York State Attorney-General of tax evasion, rape, polygamy, draft-dodging, incest and kidnapping. Some members migrated to Europe, South-East Asia and Argentina." (*SMH*, Sept. 4, 1993).

"PROTEST OVER PRIEST SEX ABUSE. SYDNEY: A group of 15 people held a vigil outside St Paul's Seminary in Kensington yesterday protesting about the sexual abuse of children and adults by Catholic priests." (*SMH*, April 11, 1994).

"CHURCH CONFRONTS CLERGY SEX ABUSE. SYDNEY: The Uniting Church is setting up new mechanism to streamline complaints of sexual abuse against members of its clergy. Under guidelines to be released tomorrow, the church will establish a sexual abuse complaints committee in each state and train staff to deal with alleged victims and accused ministers." (*SMH*, April 5, 1994).

"FORMER PRIEST CHARGED WITH 151 SEX OFFENCES. A former Catholic priest appeared in Melbourne Magistrates Court yesterday charged with 151 sexual assault offences committed over 13 years. The offences related to the sexual abuse of 14 children aged between 10 and 16 years in the western region of Victoria between 1969 and 1982." (*The Australian*, Jan.20, 1994).

"CHURCHES HID SEXUAL ABUSE. Sexual abuse of women and children by church leaders was widespread and occurred in all denominations, a conference on assault by the clergy was told yesterday. Sister Anne Hall, an advocate and educator with the Centre Against Sexual Assault, said there had been a conspiracy of silence by Australian churches and that victims had been afraid to speak out. Even now, many who did were ostracised, not believed or they blamed themselves for what happened.

Sister Anne said the Centre Against Assault received up to four calls a day from women around Australia claiming they had been assaulted by church leaders." (*SMH*, Nov.11, 1993).

"THE UNFORGIVEN. Men who leave the Catholic priesthood often feel alienated, rejected and badly equipped to make their way in the world, writes Susan Horsburgh.

Dr Brian Lang, who left the ministry in 1978 after 20 years, said, 'A priest who marries is looked upon as someone who has been snared and you still have that anti-woman thing in the church,' he explains. 'Priests who have mismanaged funds - that's tolerated, they're allowed to practice. A priest who has performed paedophile acts is moved to another parish. But let him go into a stable relationship with a woman and he's cut off immediately. That's crazy.' ...The Catholic Church appears under siege, particularly since a recent flood of sex charges against the clergy." (*The Australian*, April 8, 1994).

"COURT TAKES CHILD FROM LESBIAN. RICHMOND, Virginia: A United States judge yesterday gave custody of a lesbian's son to the boy's grandmother, saying the mother's relationship with her live-in partner 'renders her unfit parent'. The custody case had been watched closely by gay rights activists. It was unusual because it pitted a non-parent against a mother whose only alleged parental shortcoming has been her homosexuality. The grandmother, Mrs Kay Bottoms, charged that her daughter, Ms Sharon Bottoms, was unfit to be the mother of two-year-old Tyler Douston because she was a lesbian.

Mrs Bottoms testified yesterday that the boy could grow up not knowing the difference between men and women if he were returned to his lesbian mother and her lover, Ms April Wade. Judge Buford Parsons agreed. He also noted that Ms Bottoms openly admitted to engaging in oral sex, which is a felony in Virginia. 'In the opinion of this court, her conduct is immoral,' Judge Parsons said. Ms Bottoms' lawyer, Mr Donald Butler, said an appeal would be lodged with the Virginia Court of Appeals." (*The Australian*, Sept. 9, 1993).

An important development has occurred since then. The United Nations has decided to enter people's bedrooms and guarantee people's rights to engage in whatever perversions they want. If this case has not been settled by now, Ms Bottoms' lawyer will, no doubt, take it to the UN where he is sure to find a sympathetic ear. Ed.

"GAY WEDDINGS APPROVED. NUUK, Greenland: The Greenland parliament yesterday approved the civil marriages of homosexuals and lesbians, in line with laws in mainland Denmark, which administers Greenland. In October 1989, Copenhagen became the first city to allow homosexuals to marry." (*The Australian*, Feb. 24, 1994).

"GAY FURY AT VOTE ON CONSENT AGE. LONDON: Gay rights protesters tried to storm the British Parliament after MPs rejected a bid to reduce the age of consent for homosexuals from 21 to 16. They shouted 'scum' and 'shame on you' as MPs tried to go home after the vote, which ended with them opting for the age of 18.

Monday night's decision was a compromise between a drive led by gay activists to reduce the consent age to 16 - the same as it is for heterosexuals and lesbians - and resistance by some Conservatives to any change. But the vote was a measure of the rising strength of Britain's gay rights lobby in that most of the debate on the night and in the weeks before was not over whether the old law should be changed but by how much.

The vote will put British law more into line with the rest of Europe, where the age at which gay men can have sex legally ranges from 12 in Spain to 18 in Germany. Britain was the last western European country to have a consent age of 21. The consent age in the United States varies from State to State. It is 16 in the District of Columbia" (*SMH*, Feb. 23, 1994).

"GAY DANCE PARTIES A RISKY ESCAPE. One promiscuous young gay man boasted that although he was HIV-positive he never used condoms or revealed his medical status unless asked by his sex partners. It was up to them to protect themselves against AIDS, he argued. Other HIV-negative young gay men told how they deliberately took mind-altering drugs to help blot out thoughts of AIDS and free themselves to have unsafe sex with other men in darkened toilets and shower blocks.

Those were some of the disturbing attitudes encountered by Dr Lynette Lewis during a pioneering three-year study into Sydney's gay dance-party scene, the subject of her recent doctoral thesis through the University of NSW's Department of Community Medicine.

Since the advent of the Gay Mardi Gras festivities, dance parties have grown in popularity in the gay community to become an almost weekly phenomenon, she noted. Some are attended by more than 7 000 people, others are smaller and by invitation only, but all feature continuous frenetic all-night dancing, loud music, dim lighting and excessive use of psychoactive illegal and prescription drugs, notably Ecstasy, amphetamines, marijuana, LSD and Valium.

Many feature a darkened room adjoining the dance floor where patrons go to have sex, often without using condoms provided by organisers. Many attend "recovery parties" at commercial gay establishments or in private homes, where more drug-taking and high-risk sex often occur.

The study suggests that a small but growing minority of young gay men have rejected or chosen to ignore the dominant safe-sex ethos of the broader gay community and to frequent dance-parties because they offer peer support for this high-risk behaviour with drugs and sex. Paradoxically, dance-parties appear to have become important because they offer a chance for young gays to "let off steam", Dr Lewis said yesterday.

The parties offered a way of dealing with the stress that was part of their daily lives - stress linked to low self-esteem from being part of an oppressed minority, to the high death-rate from AIDS in the gay community, or to a recent HIV-positive diagnosis, she said.

Another paradox was that most of these young men had adopted the new "straighter than straight" muscular male image and deluded themselves into believing that this "magically" protected them or their sex partners. The tragic flaw in this attitude was apparent by the time her study ended: six of the 60 men she interviewed extensively and observed at dance parties had died from AIDS-related illnesses. Another two are dying now.

That was very distressing. It was one of the hardest things for me in doing this study," Dr Lewis said.

The average age of the respondents was 28, most were born in Australia or New Zealand, had full-time or part-time work and had completed tertiary education. All were sexually active, and most were not in permanent relationships. Of those who disclosed their HIV status, half were HIV-negative, 10 per cent did not know, and a quarter were HIV-positive. Almost all lived in inner-Sydney and their occupations included parole officer, a prominent lawyer, a dentist, two students, a drug dealer, an insurance agent, a gay activist and two sex workers. All used "recreational drugs. Almost three-quarters had used drugs at dance parties by the age of 19.

Based on her findings, Dr Lewis has suggested that health authorities urgently work out a new intervention campaign targeting this group. The new muscular-body image needed to be linked to safe-sex messages and condom use. More communication about safe sex and use needed to occur at dance and recovery-party venues." (SMH, May 23, 1994).

"More communication about safe sex" can also include the teaching of abstinence and proper sex within the God-sanctioned marriage. But that would not be "politically correct". Ed.

"THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. Are the Ten Commandments negative and therefore a wrong form of law?

In this permissive modern age, it is important to remind ourselves that God has promised to reward those who break this commandment with the penalty of death. 'And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death' (Lev.20:10). The seventh commandment also covers in principle all other forms of illicit sex, including male and female homosexuality - now an enormous sin in the Western world - which also warranted the death penalty (Lev.20:13). Again, in the New Testament, God says: 'For the wages of sin is DEATH' (Rom.6:23).

Why is the sin of adultery so great as to merit death, and, in God's judgment, eternal death in the lake of fire - unless really repented of? The answer is this: Marriage is in God's sight such a precious, righteous, holy thing that it must not be defiled! The meaning of marriage and its great purpose in God's plan needs desperately to be understood in this age of unhappy marriages and broken homes." (*The Ten Commandments*, Worldwide Church of God, 1972).

This was the Worldwide Church of God in 1972, the last year in which I attended its services regularly. This is the Worldwide Church of God today.

"I feel so dirty and cheap, more like a monster than a human being. No one, especially a Christian, should feel like this. But many Christian homosexuals do... To be attracted erotically to someone of the same sex seems so strange and unnatural to many heterosexual Christians... [more than that, it is totally abhorrent, as it is in the sight of God too]. We must be clear, accurate, insightful and non-condemning while honestly reflecting what we believe to be the teachings of the Bible..." [You cannot be "non-condemning" if you follow the teachings of the Bible].

Are we willing to accept the challenge to replace homophobia with compassion? Is your congregation a place where homosexuals trying to obey God find a heaven? Or is it just another place where they must face rejection?" (*The Plain Truth*, May/June, 1994).

Notice how subtly this church is now softening its members to accept homosexuality as just another form of lifestyle. It is not enough that this church should become a "heaven" for homosexuals, they want other churches to become heavens too. And those who hate this horrendous sin are now branded as homophobic. How have the mighty fallen! How the wheel has turned in just two decades!

There is no such a thing as a "homosexual Christian". Homosexuality and Christianity do not go together. Once a person has repented and been baptised, he is no longer a homosexual, he is a Christian. What people have done in their life is no longer taken into consideration. God has not only blotted out their past sins, but empowered them through the Holy Spirit to overcome their weaknesses and temptations.

Being tempted is not a sin, but allowing temptation to take hold of you is. Job who was regarded as a righteous man by God (Ezek. 14:14) said, "If my step has turned from the way, or my heart walked after my eyes...If my heart has been enticed by a woman,...that would be wickedness; Yes it would be iniquity worthy of judgment" (Job 31:7,9,11).

As long as he did not allow his heart to follow after his eyes, Job did not sin.

We are all tempted everyday. We live in a world of temptations. Wherever you look you see women and men dressed in revealing and tempting poses. They don't call it tempting, they call it "sexy" as if that is a virtue. I work with beautiful and attractive women, and I must remind myself all the time that I am a Christian. When I feel I am getting weak, I raise my eyes to God and pray within myself if I cannot find a secluded place where I could pray properly. And it works.

Even so, we must all admit that the Scripture which says that, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" refers not to the sins we have committed before we were converted - because those sins do not count - but after conversion. However, I am convinced that all who have fallen victims of Satan's traps have abhorred themselves and felt like "monsters" afterwards.

It is good if you never sin, but if you do, there is hope for you as long as you repent. The Worldwide Church of God used to preach that one has not really repented until he abhorred himself and really hated his past life. But now they preach that homosexuals need not feel bad about their "situation" that churches must become heaven for people who try. But people are not saved for trying, they are saved for overcoming.

Would that church become a heaven for adulterers too? Those who "try hard" but can't help seducing a wife or a daughter every so often.? Or murderers and thieves - people who "try hard" but can't help murdering people and stealing their cars, only once in a while? Or blasphemers who can't help taking the name of God in vain every so often?

Apostle John said that there is a sin that leads to death, and a sin that does not lead to death (1John 5:16-17). There was never a compromise in the Bible with homosexuality. You can be sure that that sin leads to death.

If you feel "accepted" for what you are even if you are still a sinful person, you are finished as far as your salvation is concerned because you no longer know the meaning of repentance. They do you no favour making you feel good and accepting you as a homosexual in a church. It is good if you abhor yourself and feel like a "monster" because in the sight of God you are just that. As long as you feel that way there is hope for you. For once you have repented, the nature of your sins no longer comes into question. You are a new person. You must not regard yourself as a homosexual anymore, and if anyone reminds you of your past sins all you need to say is that you have repented and are now a Christian. A CHRISTIAN, not a "homosexual" or "heterosexual" Christian, just a Christian, for Christians are not determined by their sexual preferences, but by their obedience to God's holy law. You either obey God's law or you don't, and if you don't it makes no difference what you are or what you do.

What you need to find is not a church that accepts you as a homosexual, but one with an atmosphere in which such thoughts do not arise or are easily quenched if they do. We have the Word of God that Jesus Christ helps those who are genuine about their conversion. He knows our temptations and our struggles, and will not abandon us in our moment of trial.

"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God... Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears." (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 12:1-2,14-17).

It is far more important that you repent now - for this is the time of repentance - than to seek a "heaven" in a church which seems to have forgotten what repentance is. Is it not more important that you save your soul than to profane your body with the perverse pleasures of this world and burn in hell? Turn to Jesus Christ and follow His example, for we have His unshakeable promise that He will help those who are genuine about their repentance.

"POWERFUL URGES OF PEOPLE ON TOP. Rabbi Sydney Brichto offers advise to politicians under fire for private misdemeanours. ...The sages had pre-empted Nietzsche's insight that a person is like a tree: the higher he sends forth his branches, the deeper must be his roots. Without condoning sexual sin, they recognised that the energy which enables individuals to achieve greatness makes them subject also to powerful sexual passions. Their advise was to keep away from temptation. The sight of a woman was fraught with danger. 'Better to walk behind a lion than a woman' was a favourite maxim. But they were aware, too, of the power of the imagination, and since there was no sure way of suppressing the sexual urge, they advised their colleagues, 'If evil urge takes control, disguise yourself, go to a strange city, sin, and return. I tell this story to put the sexual flings of President Bill Clinton and other politicians into perspective.'" (*The Australian*, Jan. 5, 1994).

This is the "perspective" into which Apostle Paul put his followers: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strong-holds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." (2Cor. 10:4-6).

"PRIEST SLAMS CHURCH'S SIN IN ABUSE COVER-UP. The Catholic Church had committed its 'greatest sin' by attempts to cover up allegations of sexual abuse against its clergy, a visiting American priest and psychologist said yesterday. Father Canise Connors is in Australia to speak to the clergy about sexual abuse and the church's attempts to overcome decades of denial." (*The Australian*, Feb. 8, 1994).

The church must overcome not decades but centuries of denial. Nineteen centuries to be more precise. Members of the Church of Rome were practising such things even in the times of the Apostles:

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them. 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, 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. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four footed beasts and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 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. 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 fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." (Rom. 1:18-32).

"THANK THE LORD FOR SUNDAYS WITH SAINT JIM. You have to get up pretty early for religion these days. Sunday morning telly used to be choka with church and thick with theology, but these days, if you want spiritual sustenance you've got to set the alarm for 5am and tune into Capitol. And if you're after the Hour of Power, it's NRTV at 5.30am, which coincides with milking.

Talking of milking, the great days of electronic evangelism, when the faithful spent every Sunday morning being milked by their favourite spiritual spruiker, are over, even in the United States. Jim Bakker's still in jail and Tammy has a new career with Amway. Jimmy Swaggart continues to explore the surreal landscape of Sam Shepard booking into the most wretched motels with low-rent hookers.

The Church of God, created by Herbert W. Armstrong, with its Plain Truth magazine and The World Tomorrow broadcasts is in disarray, following the founder's death and internecine squabbling... It wasn't so long ago that the Armstrongs, Herbert W. and Garner Ted, were just about the major users of Australian broadcasting, occupying more time than Lever & Kitchen.

Dr Robert Schuller, with his unctuous charm and Bob Hawke haircut, found Australian viewers easy marks, enthusiastic contributors to his vast overheads. (Exploiting loopholes in our tax laws, his local office was able to remit enough Aussie dollars to glaze a good part of his kitsch Chrystal Cathedral.) But it was the Bakkers and the Swaggarts who seemed to do best from Australian television, particularly on rural channels. But it wasn't only the scandals that damaged their market share here. It was the realisation by networks that Sunday mornings could be a source of revenue for themselves. Thus the Nine Network squeezed the fast-faith franchises out, replacing them with *Sunday*, a Program that's brought them considerable prestige and income. So we've seen Jims Bakker and Swaggart traded in on Jim Waley, their bible-belt vulgarities replaced with commercial television's finest public affairs program...

Garner Ted Armstrong, Jimmy Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart and Oral Roberts may all be in disgrace, their tenure in Australian television at an end, frustrated in their further attempts to pick Australian pockets. But that doesn't mean that religion isn't booming on the Sabbath. It's just that it takes slightly different forms. Thus Sunday has become the main focus of Australia's real faith, the ecumenical realm of sport. Here's where the networks have found the most devoted congregations, willing to sit before their glowing altars watching the beatified perform miracles on oval, track and court." (*The Australian*, Sept. 18, 1992).