

SITTING ON A VOLCANO

"Peace, peace!' When there is no peace. 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace." (Jer. 6:14; 8:11).

"They have seduced My people, saying, "Peace!' when there is no peace.

"The prophets... prophesy... and see visions of peace when there is no peace; therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD." (Ezek 13:10, 16, 23).

Peace in Bosnia; Peace in Chechnya; Peace in Sri Lanka; Peace in Northern Ireland; Peace in Cambodia; Peace in Rwanda; Peace everywhere. Almost all of a sudden, the world is awash with peace. Even in the Middle East, an area that has not known peace for nearly 50 years, since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, peace has broken out with the signing of the peace accord between the Palestinians and the Israelis. What if people continue to die in most of these places long after they have been declared "peaceful", if politicians tell us that they are at peace now what are we supposed to do but to believe it? The families that keep losing their sons in this "peace" might wish that they were at war.

After the accord, the Palestinian authorities received arms to enforce peace in their areas. And what happened this year when Israel opened a tunnel near the Al-Aqsa Mosque? Those guns were turned on the Israeli soldiers themselves. When asked to comment about it, Shimon Perez, the architect of that peace, said: "Peace is not poetry! Peace is not a song!" (*Lateline*, ABC TV, Oct. 10, 1996). And we who thought that peace **were** poetry and a song!

Politicians - a wonderful breed of people - have given us a new meaning for the word "peace". They made sure that we know exactly what they mean when they talk of peace. Yet, strangely enough, the Bible does not condemn them for giving the world a false vision of peace, but the "prophets". Why? Because traditionally national leaders have not been responsible for people's spiritual education, for giving them a vision of the future and telling them what life is all about. This has been the role of the prophets, a role which they have conveniently abandoned exactly when their voice needs to be heard the loudest.

The Bible ascribes the title of "prophet" to anyone who holds a spiritual position and is involved in preaching or teaching spiritual matters. In Old Testament times, God made a clear distinction between Israel's national leaders and its prophets. The prophets were God's messengers, and the leaders His executive bodies. This was to become a model for all nations, but the system has failed not only in Israel, but also in the entire world. This is why God says that the time will come when the present politico-religious systems will be replaced by a new, universal system, in which the leaders will play the roles of both priests and kings.

Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John,
Rev 1:2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.
Rev 1:3 Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near.
Rev 1:4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,
Rev 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,
Rev 1:6 and has made us **kings and priests** to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Rev 5:6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Rev 5:7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

Rev 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have **redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,**

Rev 5:10 **And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."**

It is a well-known fact that messianic religions expect major prophetic developments around the turn of this Millennium. Cynics however say that there is no difference between this and the end of the first Millennium. Many people expected major developments then, yet nothing happened. But how right are they, is there no difference between then and now?

In the first case, people's expectations were based on the fact that religious deception had already covered the world, and the Church of God had suffered major persecutions and been forced underground. The true believers saw that as an omen and an opportune time for the return of Jesus Christ. They hoped that the much waited for Millennial Kingdom would be established then and there, and they would be saved from their troubles. Yet their expectation proved to be in vain. Why? The reason is quite simple: their understanding of biblical prophecies about the end of this age proved to be very limited. All major biblical prophecies have been written in such a way that they could be understood only in the context of their own time. The difficulty with this prophecy came from the fact that some of the signs connected with the end of this age have been manifest in the world ever since the time of Jesus Christ. This is why, throughout the history of Christianity, there have been people who have fallen victim to premature expectations.

When we look at the most comprehensive prophecy about the end of this age, we find that the theme of religious deception runs through it from the beginning to the end. This could easily have led people to believe that the return of Jesus Christ was possible at any time. As long as they did not become disheartened and lost their zeal, or abandoned their struggle, this was not necessarily a bad thing, for it kept them on their guard. This time however is different. There is ample evidence that virtually all the signs leading to the conclusion of this age have been fulfilled except the one about the "abomination of desolation", and this is now in the final stages or its preparation. Let us have a look at that prophecy:

Mat 24:1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

Mat 24:2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Mat 24:3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Mat 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

Mat 24:5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

Mat 24:6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Mat 24:7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

Mat 24:8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

Mat 24:9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

Mat 24:10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

Mat 24:11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

Mat 24:12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Mat 24:13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Mat 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

Mat 24:16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Mat 24:17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

Mat 24:18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.
 Mat 24:19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!
 Mat 24:20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.
 Mat 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.
 Mat 24:22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.
 Mat 24:23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.
 Mat 24:24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.
 Mat 24:25 See, I have told you beforehand.
 Mat 24:26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it.
 Mat 24:27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.
 Mat 24:28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.
 Mat 24:29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
 Mat 24:30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.
 Mat 24:31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
 Mat 24:42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

We are much too familiar with religious deception, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecutions, lawlessness, and the like, things which have been fulfilled many times over during the centuries since the time of Jesus Christ. But nothing equals what has happened this century when it comes to wars and rumors of wars, and what has been happening in the last few years, since we started this work, in regard to pestilences, famines and natural disasters. As if on cue, these things have intensified to such an extent that it is not uncommon now to hear people in authority talk about the real possibility of extinction of all life on earth. Here is a sample of how bad things are out there in the world:

“DISASTROUS YEAR. MUNICH: The world was shaken by a record number of natural disasters in 1995, with damage from floods, earthquakes, storms and volcanic eruptions trebling to \$244 billion compared with last year, according to Munich Re, the world's largest reinsurer.” (*Reuters, Sydney Morning Herald, December 29, 1995*).

From 1990 until last year the damage from these disasters has been between \$80 and \$100 billion a year, in itself way above previous averages. This year, the damage from floods in China alone has been estimated to exceed \$100 billion. This is why the end of this Millennium is different from the first. But there is one other major factor which was not present at the end of the first Millennium: the existence of nuclear weapons which could destroy life on earth in one big conflagration.

Russia may have collapsed economically, but its strategic forces still pose awesome destructive power. What is happening in that country at present is hard to imagine even by the standards of third world countries. A catastrophe beyond imagination. After his re-election, President Yeltsin appealed to his countrymen to pay their taxes so that the government can pay the soldiers and workers who have not been paid for months. In other words, Russia's infrastructure is such that the government cannot even collect the money it needs to keep the country going.

Can anyone imagine what would happen if the American or European workers and soldiers were not paid for months?

Now what will those hungry people, with their finger on the nuclear trigger, do when hunger reaches their bones? Or what will the man who will soon replace Yeltsin do to pull the country out of its mire? We all know what Zhirinovskiy said he would do if he became president. He would force the West Europeans to pay. If the Israeli people suffered grievously during the Second World War to be entitled to the billions of dollars that have been pouring into the country since then, the Russians suffered more, he said. The West breathed a sigh of relief when he failed in his bid for the Presidency, but who knows what the new leader

will do to help his countrymen? One thing is sure, things cannot continue much longer the way they are now. In 1993, in the No 3 edition of *The Christian Herald*, we wrote:

“The former Soviet Union gave us Chernobyl then it collapsed. The world breathed a sigh of relief in the hope that the Cold War and the danger of nuclear confrontation were over. What the world did not know then was that the legacy of communism is just as catastrophic for the world as the danger from its nuclear arsenals: "Russia's nuclear-powered submarines and ice-breakers pose a greater danger of nuclear accidents than do its atomic power plants, according to Jane's Intelligence review" (*The Sun-Herald*, Aug. 8, 1993).

People who are environmentally conscious know about the devastation caused by the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska. But how many people know that in the vast Russian wilderness, four times that amount is being spilled every day from the decaying antiquated oil installations? The damage done to the environment by the oil spill and its many accompanying fires is incalculable. The topsoil is being destroyed and the ground below, which was permanently frozen, is beginning to melt. Scientists fear that this will affect the global climate. Already in 1990, the temperature in the Arctic Circle reached 40 degrees Celsius, eight degrees above the normal.

On the political scene, things are hardly better. The West has put all its hopes in President Yeltsin's ability and determination to introduce democratic reforms in Russia. But what will happen when he is no longer on the scene? He is in poor health, and while there seem to be no obvious contenders who can step in his shoes and continue his reforms, there are many powerful rivals who call for the restoration of Russia's empire. On the economic sphere, the one great resource that gives Russia its hard currency and keeps its grossly outdated industry going is oil. But now it has been estimated that its oil reserves will dry out within a decade. What will the political and military leaders do when they see their people being decimated by hunger and their nuclear arsenal brought to nothing for lack of fuel? The dangers coming from that part of the world are yet to be comprehended.”

We are already seeing the people of Russia being decimated. The question is how long will they meekly accept their fate? Having been brutalized psychologically and physically by seventy years of communism, they need a little time to rise again. Make no mistake about it, rise they will, because God Almighty has given them a great role to play at this time.

Now compare what we wrote in 1993 with the current state of the world in regard to oil reserves and supplies:

“Running on empty” “All numbers are wrong - that much we know. The question is: “by how much?” ask international petroleum geologists Dr Colin Campbell and Dr Jean Laherrere at the beginning of their landmark, but controversial, study of the world's oil supply. In a report for oil industry analysts Petroconsultants, the two turn the conventional view about the continuing availability of cheap oil on its head, drawing conclusions that market conditions are fast approaching for another oil price shock similar to the two in the 1970s that played havoc with the world economy. Unlike both industry and government forecasts, the data in the Swiss-headquartered Petroconsultants' report brings forward the timing of the peak in world oil production by several decades, from the middle of the next century to as soon as 2000. They forecast a sharp decline in the supply of cheap-to-extract crude oil thereafter. . .

US Department of Energy deputy assistant secretary Dr Joseph Roman was quoted in a news report last January as saying: “it's pretty clear there is going to be another oil crisis some time. I would say in the next 10 years” . . .

At the time of the first oil shock in late 1973, the world had consumed 250 billion barrels of oil out of a total estimated global reserves of about 1800 billion barrels. By 1995, it had consumed 800 billion barrels, with consumption running at 25 billion barrels a day and only about 7 billion barrels a year being discovered in new fields. . .

Without cheap oil, economic globalization would come to a shuddering halt and many of the private tollways either proposed or being built would become uneconomic, especially if the price of crude oil was to double or triple - as Campbell believes it will do once the crunch approaches.” (*The Australian*, Oct. 24, 1996).

Does anyone remember what effect the rise in oil prices in the 1970s had on the world economy? Third world countries became bankrupt overnight and the USA turned from being the world's biggest creditor to the world's biggest debtor nation. At present, the USA owes more than 6 trillion dollars and is unable to pay even the interest on that amount. Each year part of the interest is being added to the main with the result that the debt keeps growing with no end in sight. One way the Americans could slash that debt is by devaluing the dollar. But that would mean an astronomical rise in inflation and an end to the much-vaunted American way of life. Like the Germans before Hitler came to power, the Americans would go shopping with bags of money to buy one loaf of bread. But such things could not happen in America, could they?

The reason the American economy has been running smoothly so far is that foreigners have been pouring money into the country. Why? Because the United States offers a safe and secure environment. Safe and secure, that is, until the next crunch or until they get a leader who says enough is enough - let everyone pay their way. Now if the first oil crunch had such a devastating effect on the world, what will the next one do? Bear in mind that the first time there was still plenty of oil around and only the price increased. But this time not only will the price go up, the oil sources will begin to dry up too. The question is, will the leaders take the necessary measures to prepare their countries for this eventuality, or will they wait until they are forced to do so? The place to start would be with agriculture. At present this is in a shambles worldwide. While parts of the world experience famine and starvation, others waste enormous amounts of resources on poor farming practices. The next oil crunch will put an end to economies of scale in farming. That is because such farming relies heavily on petrochemicals.

What happened in Russia after the collapse of communism, when the farmland became littered with abandoned machinery, will happen in the rest of the world. A nation can survive without advanced industry, but not without farm produce. The worldwide trend of people moving from country to city will reverse, and farming will once again become an honorable occupation. Now given the importance of that report you would think that such information would make front-page headlines in the world media. Or, if not front-page, maybe the second or the third pages. Or even the ninth and tenth pages where world events are usually reported. But no, that article was buried on page 27, in the business section amidst the usual chain of trivial business news and advertisements. You see, that kind of information is not for the general consumption. It is for the business leaders who know how to take such news in stride and keep quiet about it lest they rock the boat and lose their jobs. If the general population knew about what lies ahead they might stop buying those cars and bring the industry to a standstill.

Have you ever wondered why they keep on building cars that are unsuited for the purpose for which people use them? They have enough power to carry two tons when they only need to carry a few people, and can travel at speeds that exceed 200 kilometers an hour when the speed limit is usually half that. They could slash fuel consumption by building cars that are slower and safer, instead of those destructive petrol hungry machines that appeal to the hotheads who should not even be on the road. The world would slow down and be a safer and more enjoyable place, and people would find time to talk to each other instead of being on the run all the time. But since the leaders are unlikely to engineer such changes of their own volition, nature will force it on them. Nature or, shall we say, God? There is a reason why the Bible talks about the need for a great tribulation at the end of this age. The world simply needs to be cleansed of its pollutions and its polluters.

Notice how shortly after the Gospel is witnessed to the world God will destroy "those who destroy the earth":

Rev 11:3 And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Rev 11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

Rev 11:5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.

Rev 11:6 These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

Rev 11:7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

Rev 11:8 And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

Rev 11:9 Then *those* from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.

Rev 11:10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Rev 11:11 Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.

Rev 11:12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.

Rev 11:13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Rev 11:14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

Rev 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

Rev 11:16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

Rev 11:17 saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

Rev 11:18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should **destroy those who destroy the earth.**"

Now are these things mere coincidences? Is it so difficult to understand that we are living in those times? What this passage indicates is that the Great Tribulation, which will "destroy those who destroy the earth", will erupt shortly after the two witnesses finish their mission and are killed by "the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit". The question many people would want to know is who is this "beast"? We have written extensively on this topic (See *The Christian Herald's* Nos. 3 and 4), so we won't spend time on this now; sufficient to say here that this has been identified with the one who holds the title of Pontifex Maximus. Here is a passage which we wrote in 1993, which has particular relevance at this time:

"Jesus Christ said that if we want to be the sons of God we must love even our enemies . . . This raises the question, must we forgive the "abomination of desolation" and the false prophet? The answer could only be 'yes'. They are the enemies of the people of God, but Jesus Christ told us to love our enemies, and since we are His followers we obey Him. We do not avenge ourselves on anyone, regardless of what they may have done to us. Vengeance belongs to God (Rom. 12:19). We lay our problems and burdens before Him and before our Savior, knowing that "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom. 8: 28).

"At the time of writing this article, it was announced that the Israeli government has extended a formal invitation to the Pope to visit that country. The Pope is said to have accepted the invitation with tears in his eyes. It will be the first time in the history of Israel that a Pope has visited that country and its capital Jerusalem. A visit to Jordan and parts of Jerusalem in 1963 by Pope Paul VI, can be discounted as having served any prophetic purpose for the following reasons: (i) Daniel's prophecies are about the Jews and the people of God, not about the Arabs. (ii) At that time it was not known who the "abomination of desolation" was, or where the holy place located. Since Jesus Christ said that if people are not aware of their sins they are not held accountable, Pope Paul VI could not have profaned the holy place even if he happened to pass unwarily over it. (iii) Jesus Christ said that when the "abomination of desolation" stands in the holy place, it would be the beginning of the great tribulation and the end of this age. Since neither of these events has occurred, that visit could not have fulfilled the prophecies associated with the end of this age. However, when the present day Pontifex Maximus goes to Jerusalem and steps on the holy ground, it is a different story.

The significance of this event is well known because we have sent this magazine to the leaders of all nations, including the Pope and other religious leaders. How soon after this event do we expect to see the world plunged into catastrophe? We cannot tell. All we can do is quote what Jesus Christ said. You draw your own conclusions from this . . . Bear in mind that 1997 is the last year of what we call the 'age of man' -

six thousand years since the creation according to the chronology of Bishop Usher - and the beginning of a new age, the last thousand years called the Millennial Kingdom. This transition cannot happen overnight. The years immediately prior to and following this event are fraught with danger for the world.

There are people who have gone to great lengths to calculate the exact date of the return of Jesus Christ. Most of the dates they have come up with revolve around that year. We believe that even if this is correct, it is a very dangerous practice. Jesus Christ said that it is not for us to know the exact date of His return, that only God knows that (Matt. 24:36). And that for a very important reason: human beings are to be ready to receive their Lord at any time. Setting dates could cause them to lose their guard and be caught unprepared. Anyone who tries to outguess God places himself in competition with Him, and that is a sin. Jesus Christ spoke in general terms about the signs leading to that event, and we advise you to read the entire 24th chapter of the book of Matthew. 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 fulfillment 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. The Polish priest who is now in the chair of Pontifex Maximus does not have to be the man who profanes the holy place. He can drop his garbs, get on his knees before the Almighty, not before the statue of Mary or whatever, declare that he was not aware of what he stood for, ask for forgiveness, then run from that place as fast and as far as he can go. He can let another take his place, for there are many people who care little about pleasing God, and more about pleasing themselves. Anyone who goes to Jerusalem as Pontifex Maximus and steps on the ground in which Jesus Christ shed His blood, conscious of what that gesture means, makes himself the "abomination of desolation." That sin will not be forgiven in this world or in the world to come.

‘For if we sin willfully 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 Christian Herald*, No 3, pp. 38, 39).

If you wonder what is wrong with Pontifex Maximus and why he is such a despised figure in the Bible, this is why: a) He was the spiritual leader of the Roman Empire at the time Jesus Christ was crucified, and is held responsible for that act and for countless other crimes against the people of God. Bear in mind that this is a title and an office, and Jesus Christ referred to this, not to a specific individual. People have the choice of taking on this mantle or not. It is not imposed on them. They freely do so, knowing full well what that means.

b) One of the main characteristics of people in this office has been their infatuation with idols. The men who have held this position have raised idolatry to a fine art. The effect this has had on their followers has been devastating. Notice:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rom 1:30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Rom 1:31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;

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

Have you ever wondered why the Catholic Church and its priests have been embroiled in so many homosexual scandals? This biblical passage should give you an idea. Next time you see the images of “corruptible men-- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” adorning their buildings think of the words of Apostle Paul.

c) One of the greatest blasphemies human beings can commit is assuming one of God’s titles. Jesus Christ specifically told his followers: “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven”? (Matt 23:9). What title has Pontifex Maximus assumed for himself? “Holy Father”. What do his followers call him? “Holy Father”. Do they honor Jesus Christ when they so blatantly do what He told them not to do? Yet, they still call themselves Christians.

Do you see now what Apostle Paul meant when he wrote?

2Th 2:1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

2Th 2:2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

2Th 2:3 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,

2Th 2:4 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.

d) In October this year, the Pope delivered a lecture to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in Rome in which he said that: “Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution was ‘more than a hypothesis’” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, Oct. 5, 1996). Charles Darwin was an atheist. So the man who goes around the world as “Universal Shepherd”, who sits in the temple of God as “Holy Father”, challenges God to His face, defies the Lord whom he claims to serve, undermines the Bible publicly, and honors an atheist who has done more to destroy people’s faith in God than any other man in history except Pontifex Maximus himself.

Is it a mere coincidence that at this particular junction in world history, as this age draws to a close, that this man reveals himself for who he is and what he stands for by upholding an anti-God philosophy? Can you see now why Jesus Christ said that when this man will stand on the ground in which He shed His blood, the world will explode into a tribulation such as the world has never seen?

The Vatican announced recently that next year - in 1997 - Pontifex Maximus would visit Jerusalem.

The world is indeed sitting on a volcano ready to explode.

RELIGION UNDER MORTAL ATTACK

‘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.’ (Gal 1:8). “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For 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.” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Has science finally landed a fatal blow to religion? Darwin’s theory of evolution did not prove to be the mortal danger many people thought it would - future generations will wonder in disbelief how so flimsy a theory should have taken hold of a world that prided itself in being enlightened and progressive - but recent scientific discoveries in the fields of medicine, molecular biology and psychology have rocked religion to its core and thrown in disarray some of its most cherished beliefs and practices.

Scientists are now telling us that human behavior and attitudes are not so much the result of education, environment and social influences, as the product of one’s own biological make-up. In-born genes determine not only our physical shape, but also our character, sexual orientation, predisposition to crime, moods, etc.

“Genes are suddenly seen as being responsible for everything, from poverty to privilege, misdemeanors to murder. I seem to recall watching television one night and seeing a man on murder charges offer as a defense the presence of a ‘criminal gene’ in his family . . . “The problem with genetics and this new particulate understanding of ourselves, it occurred to me, is that it’s at once so central to who and what we are and yet so beside the point of just being us, of going about the business of living.” (Charles Siebert, “Living With Toxic Knowledge”, *SMH - Good Weekend Magazine*, March 9, 1996).

If this is true, if nature rather than nurture determines who we are and what we do, then the traditional notions of salvation must be discarded, and a more adequate explanation for the purpose of human life must be found. We have been led to believe that salvation depends on people’s ability to repent and change their way of life. But if people are beholden by their nature to a way of life which is not conducive to repentance, what purpose does it serve preaching to them about salvation? People cannot be saved if they cannot repent, and they cannot repent if nature rather than logic rules their life. What these scientific discoveries have done is turn traditional wisdom on its head, open a Pandora's box which many thought was closed long ago, and turn the clock back thousands of years - to the very beginning of the debate of free will versus predestination. In the final analysis, this is what the current debate is all about.

Since ancient time people have wondered, searched, debated, and fought over the question of the purpose and destiny of human life. At the root of it all is the question of salvation - is this the result of free will or predestination? Each of these notions ascribes a different role to God and to human beings. If predestination is true, the destiny of human life is entirely in God’s hands and salvation is a grant from Him. But if free will is true, then man is master of his own destiny and salvation is a reward for the good use of his free will.

Over the years, the tendency has been a move away from predestination, and towards free will.

Ancient people were particularly fond of predestination, ascribing all things to divine powers - fortune and misfortune alike. But modern religions are more kind to God. They lay the blame for man’s misfortunes entirely at man's feet. This, of course, is where the problem lies. Science is now telling us that this is not the case: people are committing all sorts of misdemeanors and anti-social acts, or are leading unconventional life styles (e.g., homosexuality), not because they freely choose to do so, but because they have been programmed that way from their mother’s womb. The question is, can religions afford to be seen to be constantly contrary to science? At stake are not only the reputations of many people, but also the reliability of the Bible and the faith of billions of people. Put simply, the inspired Word of God and true science cannot be at odds with each other. That is why we must establish once and for all whether science or religion is right, whether science and the Bible are indeed at odds with each other, whether religions and the Bible are in agreement, and whether salvation is determined by man’s free will or by divine providence. For this reason, we will have a careful look at what the scientists have been saying lately, at what the churches have been preaching, and at what the Bible has had to say on these matters from the very beginning.

REVOLUTIONARY SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES

Here are some of the reports of the scientific discoveries that have led to the current controversy:

“Mean gene’ theory sparks racism controversy in US” “Are some kids born to be bad? Can there be a ‘treatment’ to block them from murder? These explosive questions are back. And the even more explosive answer, in some quarters, is yes.

The renewed debate is sending chills down the spines of those who fear it will bring a Brave New World of mind control to the children of America's violent inner cities. The issue, which has simmered for decades, owes its latest revival to a University of Maryland conference this weekend on the eastern shore of Chesapeake Bay, about an hour from Washington. The conference for the first time will gather scholars from a wide array of disciplines to discuss the ethical implications of research seeking a genetic foundation for violence and other criminal behavior. Authors of the research and their supporters say it is hardly sinister. "Almost every day, we're hearing about a gene for this and a gene for that," says David Comings, a medical geneticist at the City of Hope Medical Centre in Duarte, California. If you can have a gene for obesity, it certainly can become acceptable that a gene can be involved in violent behavior." But opponents say the research raises the spectre of Nazi eugenics - the science of breeding people in quest of a superior human race. They foresee frightening possibilities such as compulsory genetic screening, sedation and sterilization, and believe the research discriminates against blacks." (*The Sunday Telegraph*, October 1, 1995).

“The brains behind our sex life” “Homosexuals, heterosexuals and transsexuals are born, not made, claims a leading United States neuroscientist who says that sexual orientation is wired into the brain before birth. Research shows that sexual preferences can be detected in tiny structures in the limbic or emotional, centre of the brain, according to Professor Roger Gorski, of the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine. The differences are produced in the womb, said the man who first discovered 20 years ago that the brains of male and female mammals are different. The findings raise the possibility that in the distant future sexual orientation may be open to medical manipulation. “This work is at the very beginning but it’s profound,” said Professor Gorski, adding that the events which produce homosexual, heterosexual and transsexual brains probably result from a ‘complex’ interaction’ of sex hormones, genes and environmental circumstances. But sex hormones are vital to setting the orientation of the unborn child, said professor Gorski. A hormonal alteration at a given time in development might alter one component of brain function which could lead one to become homosexual or transsexual. That’s the theory.’ Professor Gorski told the Herald that his research - along with that of Dr Simon Le Vay, formerly with the Salk Institute in California, and Dr Richard Swaab of Amsterdam - shows that these changes appear as differences in tiny structures in the brain called the interstitial nucleus of the anterior hypothalamus (INAH).” (*SMH*, Oct. 27, 1995).

“Genetics link with petty crime claimed” “London: Pimping and petty theft appear to be genetically conditioned - but a person’s genes have little influence on their propensity for committing crimes of violence, according to research unveiled at a controversial scientific meeting in London yesterday. Two American studies comparing identical twins, who share the same genes, with non-identical twins, have supported the contentious suggestion that some criminals may be born, not made” (*SMH*, Feb. 15, 1995).

“The Common Face of Evil” “In 1993, Dr Lyll Watson sat in on the trial of the two English schoolboys charged with murdering the toddler James Bulger. Though this killing convulsed a nation, perhaps the sharpest impression made on the best-selling author and biologist came from outside the court, where "terrifying lynch mobs were howling for blood". "These were perfectly ordinary people, neighbours and friends of the family, suddenly behaving like something out of the wild west frontier," Dr Watson recalled in Sydney this week.

The famously unorthodox scientist understood that parents reacted in this way because of a fear that the child tortured to death beside a railway track could have been their own. But he also asserts: "I think an even larger part of that [the mob's reaction] is this real fear that it could have been your children doing the killing. That's much more frightening." In this comment, and in his latest book, *Dark Nature*, Watson, 57, up-ends one of the articles of faith of Western civilisation - the innocence of

childhood. (It was the Bulger trial that sparked his interest in writing a book about evil.) In *Dark Nature*, he asserts that there is a biological equivalent of original sin, and that if we don't confront this, current social and environmental upheavals will draw us irrevocably towards a new barbarism...

Humans, like animals, are **genetically programmed** for a ruthless selfishness that is often bad or evil. Or, as Watson puts it: "Every child is born with genetic instructions which say, 1. Be nice to insiders because they're your own people, you share genes with them; 2. Be nasty to outsiders because you don't (share genes with them); and 3. Cheat, lie, steal, kill to get your own way." Crucially - and unlike animals - humans have long realised the importance of suppressing evil impulses, and of acquiring the pragmatic altruism necessary for workable societies. But as we approach a new millennium, Watson thinks the tremendous pressures of overpopulation, poverty and social dislocation increasingly put us at the mercy of primitive genetic urges - and not just in war zones such as Bosnia...

The author, whose previous subjects have included the nature of crowds, the paranormal and the wind, found himself reflecting on mass murder (and even pack rape among ducks) because he thinks theologians, moral philosophers and criminologists have failed to understand the nature of evil. He admits his findings are "cavalier in some ways because many theologians have thought about this very carefully, but they haven't come to any useful conclusions. They are tied by religious necessity to believe that everything that is good comes from God, and everything that isn't comes from the devil. They have created this polarity, which is wrong. We all have good and bad in us. Every one of us" (*The Weekend Australian*, November 4-5, 1995)

"The Secrets Twins Tell Us" "The evidence is finally in from a battery of tests on separated twins. And they challenge our most cherished beliefs about human nature... A set of identical twin girls were surrendered to an adoption agency in New York in the 60s. The twins, who are known in psychological literature as Amy and Beth, might have gone through life in obscurity had they not come to the attention of Dr Peter Neubauer, a prominent psychiatrist at New York University's Psychiatric Institute.

Neubauer, who was also an adviser to the adoption agency, believed that twins posed such a burden to parents, and to themselves in the form of certain developmental hazards, that adopted twins were better off being reared apart from each other.

It was clear that such a separation would also offer Neubauer exceptional research possibilities. Studies of twins reared apart are the most powerful tool that scholars have for analysing the relative contributions of heredity and environment to the make-up of individual human natures. Identical twins are rare, however, and twins who have been separated and brought up in different families are particularly unusual... Broadly speaking, the differences between the girls as they grew older would be a measure of the validity of the most fundamental assumption of analytical psychology, which is that - and, in particular, our family background - shapes us into the people that we become.

The agency that placed the children shortly after their birth informed each set of potential adoptive parents that the girl they were adopting was already involved in a study of child development and strongly urged the adoptive parents to continue it. However, neither the adopted parents nor the girls themselves were ever told that the subject of the study was twins... The girls were adopted into families that were, in certain respects, quite similar - both were Jewish and lived in New York State... All in all, the research team characterized Amy's family as a well-knit threesome - mother, father and son - plus an alienated Amy. It was a family that placed a high value on academic success, simplicity and emotional restraint. Beth's family, on the other hand, was sophisticated and full of energy - "frenetic" at times. It tended to put more emphasis on material things than on education. Clearly, Beth was more in the centre of her home than Amy was in hers... In almost every respect, Beth's personality followed in lockstep with Amy's dismal development. Thumb-sucking, nail-biting, blanket-clenching, and bed-wetting characterized her infancy and early childhood. She became a hypochondriac and, like Amy, was afraid of the dark and of being left alone. She, too, became lost in role-playing, and the artificial nature of her personality was even more pronounced than Amy's.

She had similar problems in school and with her peers. On the surface, she had a closer relationship with her mother than Amy had with hers, but psychological tests revealed a longing for maternal affection which was eerily the same as her identical sister's. Beth did seem to be more successful with her friends and less confused than Amy, but she was also less aware of other feelings.

The differences between the girls seemed merely stylistic; despite the differences in their environments, their pathology was fundamentally the same. Did their family lives men so little? Were they destined to become the people they turned out to be because of some genetic predisposition

towards sadness and unreality? And what would psychologists have made of either girl if they did not know that she was a twin? Wouldn't they have laid the blame for the symptoms of her neurosis on the parents who raised her? Finally, what did all this say about the fundamental presumptions of psychology? But the story has a darker and more threatening side and this may be the real secret of its grip on our imaginations. We think we know who we are. We struggle to build our characters through experience; we make ourselves unique by determining what we like, what we don't like, and what we stand for. The premise of free will is that we become the people we choose to be. Suppose, then, we meet an Other who is, in every outward respect, ourselves. It is one thing to imagine an identical Other who, having lived a separate and dismal life, has been marked by it and become different from us. But what if, in spite of all the differences, we and the Other arrive at the same place? Isn't there a sense of loss? A loss not only of identity but of purpose? We are left wondering not only who we are but why we are who we are.

The Neubauer twin study is just one among thousands that have raised these questions. Over the past decade, there has been a tidal wave of twin-based scholarship. Recent studies of twinship have challenged our most entrenched views of human development and have capsized cherished beliefs about human nature - in particular the bedrock notion that character is created by experience. But then, twins have been confounding humanity from the earliest times - almost as if they were a divine prank designed to undermine our sense of individuality and specialness in the world. If twins are important to science because they allow us to ask how much of our nature arises from our genes and how much from our circumstances, the answers have equally profound implications for social policy. The hallmark of liberalism is that changes in the social environment produce corresponding changes in human development. But if people's destinies are written in their genes, why waste money on social programs? Even matters that would seem to be entirely a reflection of one's personal experience, such as political orientation **or the depth of religious commitment, have been shown by various twin studies to be largely under genetic influence.** ... And yet twins may have a different lesson to teach us. It may be threatening to see ourselves as victims of our genes, but that may be preferable to being victims of our environment. A trait that is genetically rooted seems somehow more immutable than one that may have been conditioned by the environment. **This seems to leave aside the possibility of free choice - or even consciousness of choice at all.** And yet people who are aware of their natures are constantly struggling with tendencies they recognize as ingrained or inborn. It makes little difference how such tendencies were acquired, only how they are managed. If it is true that our identical clone can sort through the world of opportunity and adversity and arrive at a similar place, then we may as well see that as a triumph of our genetic determination to become the person we ought to be." (*Sydney Morning Herald*, Nov. 4, 1995).

Well, there you have it! There cannot be much argument about it. It is quite obvious that these findings are accurate, reliable and convincing. They are based on extensive research and carry the signatures of renowned personalities in the fields of medicine, biology and psychology from as far a field as Maryland, Los Angeles, Amsterdam, New York, Baltimore and London. The evidence that all human beings are not equal, that some are predisposed from their mother's womb to anti-social behavior is so overwhelming it cannot be dismissed even with the perennial "more research is needed".

These discoveries will have a great impact on human society. Governments will want to know whether it is wise spending large amounts of taxpayer's money on correctional programs for people that get little benefit out of them. Educational authorities will wonder whether their teaching strategies get the best results knowing that the outcomes are determined more by the pupils' natures than by the amount of money, time and effort spent on them. Insurance companies will want to screen people to find out those that pose the greatest risk. Parents will want to know what will become of their children. Will they be tempted to terminate their pregnancy if they discover that their children's genes predispose them to unconventional behavior - crime, homosexuality, etc.?

But the greatest impact will, no doubt, be felt by religions. The universal message of salvation, which holds that all human beings have an inborn ability to choose to live a godly life, preached in its various forms by virtually all religions, is suddenly on shaky grounds. We now know that human beings are neither equal nor equally capable of repenting. Some people are predisposed from conception to live a life that is not conducive to salvation. This means that the traditional message of salvation has been based on false premises all along. The question is how did religions get it so wrong? Did they get their message out of the Bible or out of their own imagination? This is what we intend to find out now.

PREDESTINATION AND FREE WILL IN RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* has divided this topic in three sections: “Predestination in the Bible”, “Predestination in the Catholic Theology”, and “Catholic Teaching”. One might have thought that “Predestination in the Bible” is the same as that in “Catholic Theology” and “Catholic Teaching”, but, apparently, this is not the case. We shall see.

“Predestination in the Bible” “In the sense that all things are foreknown and foreordained by God, predestination is coextensive with the providence of God and is a constant theme of the OT and the NT. Predestination, in the sense of foreordination of man to glory, is clearly taught only in the NT. Predestination is just as clearly taught in the Old Testament, as we shall show.”

Hmmm! Does this make any sense to you? “Predestination . . . is clearly taught only in the NT. Predestination is just as clearly taught in the Old Testament.” If an undergraduate student went to his lecturer with this kind of logic, you can well imagine what mark he would get. But these people are Doctors in Theology, and who can question their wisdom?

“The ‘book’ mentioned by Moses when he said “strike me out of the book that you have written” (Ex 32.32) is undoubtedly the Book of Life, which is mentioned also in Ps 68(69).29 and Dn 12.1. But in the NT, when Our Lord says “Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25.34) or tells His disciples “Rejoice rather in this, that your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10.20; see also Jn 10.29), He is teaching predestination.

It is in St. Paul, however, that one finds the most explicit statements on predestination. ‘Now we know that for those who love God all things work together unto good, for those who according to his purpose are saints through his call. For those whom he has foreknown he has also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom He has predestined, them He has also called; and those whom He has called, them He has also justified, and those whom He has justified, them He has also glorified’ (Rom. 8.28-30). In these verses Paul sees the unique and eternal act of God as involving five decisions: elective knowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. The first two are invisible and outside of time; the second two are on earth; and the last is properly in the next world.”

While this passage appears to make a good case for predestination, the next one makes just as good a case for free will.

“Man's freedom still remains: he must respond to the love and call of God. Nor in St. Paul's concept is there any initial confirmation in grace, for he tells the Philippians to work out their salvation ‘with fear and trembling’ (2.12).”

Then again we are brought back to the notion of predestination:

“In another important passage, Eph. 1.3-14, Paul repeats 10 times that predestination is ‘in Christ’: ‘He chose us in him before the foundation of the world’ (v.4); it was done according to the ‘good pleasure of his will . . . to the praise and glory of his grace . . . in his beloved Son’ (v.5-6). Predestination is clearly a free act of God, a choosing of all men for glory, in, with, and through His Incarnate Son. There is no basis in St. Paul for any doctrine of positive reprobation: ‘For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all’ (I Tm. 2.5; see also 1 Tm. 4.10; Mt 18.14).”

This is all the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* has to say about predestination and free will in the Bible. Not very much, you would agree.

If you are confused, you are not alone. First we were told that God “predestined [us] to become conformed to the image of His Son”, and then that our “freedom still remains”, then again that

“predestination is clearly a free act of God.” Now, can one be predestined and retain his freedom at the same time? The implication is that this topic is not very well covered in the Bible. That is why people need the next two chapters, “Predestination in Catholic Theology” and “Catholic Teaching”. This is perfectly in line with the Catholic teaching that the Bible is incomplete. Catholic leaders maintain that people need the wisdom gained from tradition and the church “Fathers”, and especially from the revelations of the Pope, to come to the full knowledge of the truth. For those of us who believe that the Bible is complete, this is anathema. It would be enough to cause us to abandon any further study of their sources. Nevertheless, in our search for truth, we must leave no stone unturned. So let us see what they have to say in the next two chapters.

“PREDESTINATION IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY”

“Predestination is the plan eternally conceived by God whereby He conducts rational creatures to their supernatural end, that is, to eternal life. Of necessity this plan is very complex. It must be concerned, first of all, with the ‘supernatural order: its end, which is eternal life; its means, the complexus that we term supernatural grace (sanctifying and actual, efficacious and sufficient grace, the infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit). Predestination also closely involves the divine foreknowledge of future free acts, the exercise of the free will of man, and divine predilection.”

Catholic theologians have raised the art of prevarication and obfuscation to a high level. Here we have a deliberate juxtaposition of the two doctrines. How can predestination involve “the divine foreknowledge of future free acts, the exercise of the free will of man, and divine predilection”? By their own definitions, predestination and free will are opposites and incompatible with each other.

“Predestination and Related Concepts” “In its most general sense, predestination is a decree of God, an inner decision of the divine wisdom and will, whereby God resolves and determines what He Himself will bring to pass.”

“According to St. Paul, it is the counsel of the divine will whereby God works all things (Eph. 1. 1), or, according to St. Augustine, it is that whereby He disposes within Himself what He intends to accomplish (*Persev.* 17.41; PL 45:1018). In this general sense, divine predestination has a bearing on all the works of God. Everything that He does and effects is predestined by Him through an eternal decree before it is carried out in time. More precisely, however, predestination signifies the ordination of God by which certain men are led efficaciously to the attainment of salvation. On the part of God, this divine ordination involves two actions. There is, first, an act of the divine intellect, by which God infallibly foreknows which men are to be saved and the precise means whereby they will attain this salvation.”

“Second, it includes an act of the will of God by means of which He decrees to save these men in the very fashion that He Himself has planned. For this reason, St. Augustine has defined predestination as ‘the foreknowledge and preparation of those gifts of God whereby they who are liberated are most certainly liberated’ (*Persev.* 14.35; PL 45:1014).” “According to Augustine, the object of predestination is salvation, the freeing from servitude of sin, and all the benefits through which salvation is attained, i.e., efficacious graces, including the gift of final perseverance. The infallible connection between these benefits, that is, the means and the freeing from servitude, has its ultimate foundation in God Himself. The subject of predestination is all men who are in fact saved.”

Well, what do you make of that? Would you trust your salvation and eternal life to someone who tells you that, “they who are liberated are most certainly liberated”, and “The subject of predestination is all men who are in fact saved”? If people are already saved, why predestine them any more? Isn’t this what predestination is supposed to do - to assure them of salvation?

“ . . . Viewed therefore, in its totality, predestination includes on the part of God the following: (1) the provision of the end; (2) a determined grade or degree of glory; and (3) the ordination of the

means. These three factors are concerned with acts of the divine intellect. In addition, there are the following, which are concerned with the divine will: (1) the first calling of the elect to justification; (2) the decree to confer efficacious graces; and (3) the decree to confer the final perseverance.”

“Although the act of the divine will is most simple, it nevertheless does not attain its created objectives in the same way. Hence, predestination has been considered by the theologians in concepts of varying comprehensiveness.

(1) Predestination viewed in its totality. This is predestination insofar as it is concerned with the complete series of graces by which man is saved. Predestination in this sense considers the entire process from beginning to end, from the first calling of a soul to the way of salvation to the conferral of final glory.

(2) Predestination partially viewed. This is predestination considered in only one aspect of the entire series of effects. It is derived from the division of the entire process of predestination into its logical, component parts. Thus, one may consider predestination faith alone, predestination to justification alone, or even predestination to glory alone.”

The Bible makes no such divisions and differentiations. They complicate the issue by introducing concepts that are irrelevant, incomprehensible, or plainly unbiblical. It makes one wonder, who are these people writing for? Obviously not for the average people like you and me. They have forgotten that theology is supposed to be expressed in simple language, like the Bible, so that all people understand it. Did not Apostle Paul write that God prefers the simple people to those who think that they are wise?

1Co 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.

1Co 1:27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

1Co 1:28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

1Co 1:29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

This chapter is hardly more enlightening than the first one. But, we must not despair, for we are yet to look at the “Catholic Teaching”. Surely, they won’t leave millions of their followers in suspense about such an important matter.

“CATHOLIC TEACHING”

“The mystery of predestination stands in the middle of two extremes each of which either completely abandons one or the other of its two organically connected elements, or, at any rate, puts such excessive emphasis on one that the other is neglected. Either the independence and self-activity of man is overly stressed to the exclusion of God's initiation and guidance of man's preliminary steps and continued progress (Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism), or the divine initiative and guidance is represented as inexorably driving and hurrying man along in such a way that his own free movement and advance are obscured or completely denied (predestinationism).”

“Prior to the time of St. Augustine the Fathers of the Church were not preoccupied with the problem of predestination.”

This is a very important statement which tells us much about the state of affairs in the early church. It forces us to ask why is it that predestination and free will were not a major issue with the early Christians? Could it be that they knew the answer? We shall find that out soon.

“It was the bishop of Hippo who first treated the mystery exhaustively, with the theological decisiveness so characteristic of him.

From 418 until 531, there took place in the Western Church many grave controversies concerned with explaining the ultimate foundation for the salvation of those who are saved (the elect) as well as

ascertaining the reason for the condemnation of those who are in fact not saved (the reprobate). This theological ferment centered around the Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian controversies. “

Notice that this became a major problem only after “Christianity” became the official religion of the Roman Empire. (For a detailed analysis of what really happened then and why so much “theological ferment” ensued afterwards, see *The Christian Herald* No 4).

“Pelagianism” “This heresy denied the necessity of supernatural grace and consequently did not admit of predestination in the true sense of the word. It maintained that man, by the mere use of his free will and by his other natural powers is able to believe and act in a salutary manner without the assistance of supernatural grace and thus obtain eternal beatitude. According to this doctrine, some species of predestination could be admitted. It would be nothing more, however, than the foreknowledge of God through which He foresees which men will attain salvation through their own efforts. Consequently God, through His divine prevision, chooses as the blessed those whom He has foreseen would be saved solely through their own powers.”

Although the Pelagians come under criticism here, their theology does not appear to have been very different from that of present day Catholic theologians. The idea that God, through His divine prevision, foresees and chooses those who are saved “solely through their own powers” was present in the previous chapter too. If human beings have free will and attain salvation through their own actions, not even God can have foreknowledge of those who will be saved. By its very definition, foreknowledge means predestination, and predestination implies the absence of free will.

“Semi-Pelagianism.” “On the other hand, Semi-Pelagianism attempted to mitigate the extreme position of Pelagianism. It affirmed that without the assistance of divine grace fallen man is unable, by his natural powers, either to be justified or to posit acts that would be meritorious of eternal life. But above all else, the universal salvific will of God must be maintained. It was felt that this salvific will would really be denied, unless it was unequivocally affirmed that the ultimate foundation for the salvation of the saved and the condemnation of the reprobate is to be found in the good use or abuse of human freedom. If God truly and sincerely desires all men to be saved, He must, on His part, will the salvation of all with a complete equality and indifference. He must show no favoritism or special preference regarding the salvation of one man over that of another. If this were not the case, then the salvation of one man and the damnation of another would be directly due to God's action alone. This would destroy any semblance of a universal salvific will and would be unjust.”

Do human beings have the right to judge God by their own standards? Has He not made it clear that He does not give men the right to define or question His sense of justice? What did Apostle Paul write in his epistle to the Romans?

Rom 9:17 For the Scripture says to the 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."

Rom 9:18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

Rom 9:19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

Rom 9:20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?"

Rom 9:21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Rom 9:22 What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

Rom 9:23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

Rom 9:24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

It is obvious that whatever differences there may have been between the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians, they had one thing in common: they both believed in salvation through the good use of one's free will.

“Semi-Pelagianism claimed, therefore, that Augustine's basic principle, of the gratuitous predilection and preelection of God being the ultimate reason for the salvation of the elect, is irreconcilable with the dogma of the universal salvific will. The ultimate foundation for salvation must be found in man, not in God. Man, though he is fallen, is able through his own natural powers to desire and ask for salvation. He is able to believe and thus posit the first step in the process of salvation, which is faith. God then comes and confers the rest, i.e., justification, meritorious acts, and glory. Despite the disparity between man's meagre natural efforts and the conferral of the supernatural gifts by God, it is, nevertheless, this unaided free use of his will directed toward God that is the ultimate reason why one man rather than another attains justification and salvation.” (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, Mc Graw-Hill, 1967, pp. 713-715).

So, the Semi-Pelagians, who were supposed to “mitigate the extreme position of Pelagianism”, assured us in the end that, “The ultimate foundation for salvation must be found in man, not in God.” One wonders what would they have made of these statements:

Jer 10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; *It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*

Joh 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

THE AMERICAN ENCYCLOPEDIA

“In Christianity, this is the doctrine that God foreordains, or wills, some men to eternal life. In its broadest sense predestination is God's providence or plan for all things toward reestablishing harmony with him. More narrowly, it is the doctrine of election, holding that some men are elected, or chosen, by God to fulfil his purpose. "Election" usually refers to chosen groups and individuals, while "predestination" tends to refer only to individuals. Predestination is based on the Old Testament concepts of Israel as God's chosen people and of chosen persons such as judges, prophets, and kings. It is further developed in the New Testament concept of the church, or body of believers, as the elect. Paul is especially concerned with the predestination of individuals (Romans 8:28-30).

The Bible does not make clear, however, how many are to be saved. On the one hand, God wills salvation for all (Matthew 18:14; John 3:16; Romans 11:32; 1 Timothy 2:4). On the other, the very concept of the chosen means some but not all (Luke 18:7; Romans 11:8); and there is the further implication that "some" means "few" (Matthew 22:14). This ambivalence presents the problem of why a wise, merciful, just God can permit or will that not everyone should be saved.

A further problem arises in that Paul and other biblical authors insist that predestination to salvation is by God's free gift of grace undeserved by sinful man. Yet they also maintain that it does not deny man's free will and responsibility.

Christian thinkers since biblical times have wrestled with these difficulties. Augustine was one of the earliest to develop the doctrine, but he left room for much reinterpretation. At one extreme is the deterministic doctrine of double predestination, which holds that God grants irresistible grace to those sinful men whom he predestines to salvation and withholds it from those others, no more sinful, whom he predestines to damnation. Such a view, originally stated by a 5th century priest, was developed by Luther and especially by Calvin, who maintained that sinful man has no right to question the justice of God's arbitrary actions. At the other extreme are universalist views that deny or modify predestination by maintaining that a just God desires salvation for everyone. Pelagianism, a 4th century doctrine opposed by Augustine, held that man can attain salvation through his own effort, without grace. Semi-Pelagianism held that grace is necessary, but man must request it on his own initiative. God predestines those whose merit he foresees. According to Arminianism, developed in the 16th century, God knows who will freely choose his resistible grace and who will reject it, but he

does not will their rejection. Arminianism, adopted by Methodists, modified most Protestant teaching. The Catholic view, stated most concretely by Aquinas, tries to maintain a balance between the extremes. It holds that God wills salvation for all and offers sufficient grace to all, which man can freely reject. But God also grants an additional, irresistible, efficacious grace to the elect predestined to salvation. The coherence of these juxtaposed doctrines is a mystery. Predestination is part of Judaism and Islam in the broad sense that everything is under God's providence. Islam also teaches individual predestination, which on the popular level is fatalistic and on the theological level is linked with free will in a mystery." (*American Encyclopedia*, 1992, Vol. 22, p. 536).

This pretty well sums it all up: "The coherence of these juxtaposed doctrines is a mystery" not only in the Catholic Church, but virtually in the theology of all who have tackled this subject. We are no closer to knowing whether salvation is a matter of divine providence or a reward for one's good actions now than we were at the beginning of our search.

"PREDESTINATION IN NON-CATHOLIC THEOLOGY"

For this purpose, we return briefly to the New Catholic Encyclopedia. We found out this encyclopedia to offer a better explanation of non-Catholic theology than their own sources.

"At the very beginning of this article it should be clearly stated that actually there is no single doctrine concerning predestination that would be acceptable to all branches of Protestantism. Therefore, it would be inaccurate and ill advised to present this article as being the Protestant theology of predestination. All that one can do is treat of historic Protestantism as it has faced the problem of predestination, i.e., trace the theories of election and reprobation that can be found in the main currents of Protestantism as it has flowed through the history of the past 400 years . . ."

"Martin Luther" "The two men who played key roles in the early history of Protestantism, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin, were both deeply influenced by the theological thinking of the centuries previous to those in which they lived. St. Augustine, as understood by them, was a great influence. So were Gottschalk of Orbais in the 9th century and, more proximately, John Wyclif in the 14th. Luther, in his earlier years at least, maintained as extreme a doctrine of predestination as Calvin himself was later to profess. This is important to note since, by and large, modern Lutheranism rejects the extreme approach to predestination that was so emphatically taught by its founder. There are some who claim that in his later years Luther mitigated his doctrine of predestinarianism to a less rigid form of predestination. Actually, however, it seems that although there is a difference in the technical terminology utilised by Luther in the first and later form of his theology, nevertheless the later form does not constitute a radical departure from his earlier conception.

When Luther first began to grapple with the problem of predestination, about 1509 or 1510, he accepted the solution that was common among the schoolmen, that predestination is in some way to be explained by God's foreknowledge of man's conduct. But upon more assiduous study of the Bible and St. Augustine, Luther gradually underwent a complete reversal of opinion and finally professed the doctrine of predestinarianism, which he claimed to be the true teaching of the Bible as well as of St. Augustine.

The most complete sources concerning Luther's teaching on predestination are his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans and his work *De servo arbitrio* (The Will Enslaved), the latter being written in answer to Erasmus's attack on his doctrine, *De libero arbitrio* (Free Will). Essentially, the doctrine contained in these works may be summarised as follows. There exists on the part of God an irrevocable election of some souls to eternal beatitude and positive rejection of the rest, who go to eternal perdition. As proof, Luther gives Paul's references to the scriptural stories of God's election and rejection in the three cases of Isaac and Ismael, of Jacob and Esau, and of David and Saul.

According to Luther, all objections to predestination, as he understands it, come from human reason and not from the wisdom of God. The objections:

1. Man has been given a free will by which he can earn either merit or demerit. (Luther replies that man's will in itself has not the least ability to secure justification, because the will itself is totally corrupt, totally unable to choose anything but sin. Indeed, the will is not free but captive.)

2. Predestination, as held by Luther, is inconsistent with the teaching of Sacred Scripture, which states (I Tm 2.4) that "God our Saviour . . . wishes all men to be saved." (Luther's reply is that all such statements are realised properly in the elect. One must make a distinction between "the apparent will" and "the hidden will" of God. It is interesting to note that in his translation of I Timothy Luther renders the above as "God wills that all be assisted.")(*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, Mc Graw-Hill, 1967, p. 715).

Luther started well, but in the end he stumbled over the notion of divine justice. When he could not explain it, he decided to change the Bible. His remodeling of I Timothy 2:4 from, "God our Savior . . . wishes all men to be saved", to, "God wills that all be assisted", places him on a collision course with Jesus Christ, who gave a strong warning to anyone who dared to tamper with the Scriptures. (Rev. 22).

Luther's "apparent" and "hidden" wills of God are also non-biblical. Friedrich Richter quoted Luther as having said that, "God acts according to an arbitrary will, and there is no telling what He will do". (*Martin Luther and Ignatius Loyola*, trans. from German by L. Zwinger, Newan Press, 1960, p. 103). Any wonder that people have lost their faith in God and in His sense of justice? Other people who have written on this topic include Huldrych Zwingli, Phillip Melancton, Jacobus Arminius and Karl Barth, none of whom having been able to resolve the dichotomy between predestination and free will or adding anything new worth mentioning here.

FREE WILL IN THE JEWISH THEOLOGY

"Free will, a philosophical and theological notion referring initially to the observation that man is able to choose between a number of possible courses of action, becoming, through his choice, the cause of the actions which he selects. Among philosophers some accepted this observation as the true account of how men act, while others held that though man appears to be free to choose, his actions are, in fact, compelled, either by God or by laws of nature. While there were some Jewish philosophers who inclined toward a deterministic position, the majority affirmed that man, through choice, is the author of his own actions. Jewish philosophers generally considered a doctrine of free will as indispensable for accounting for man's moral responsibility for his own actions, and they considered it necessary for explaining God's justice in punishing evil-doers. Closely related to the notion of free will are those of divine providence and divine omniscience."

As was the case with their Catholic and Protestant counterparts, Jewish theologians also stumbled over the question of divine justice. While some people inclined towards predestination, the vast majority believed that only free will could hold people morally responsible for their actions and explain divine justice. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, from which we took this quote, went on to list a long line of theologians who have written on this topic. Here are the views of some of the most prominent:

Philo. "The question of the freedom of man's will is discussed in a number of places, but his position on this matter is not sufficiently defined . . . Philo's notion of man's free will contains a certain innovation in contrast to traditional Greek philosophy, since Aristotelians, for example, tended to view man's free choice as a defect and deficiency, contingent on his material being."

Saadia Gaon. "It appears that according to Philo, there is almost no connection between the notion of man's free will and the problem of divine justice. In contrast, Saadia, who was heavily influenced by Mu'tazilite philosophy, maintains that the idea of God's justice necessarily implies the freedom of man's will."

Bahya Ibn Paquda. “He briefly presents the ideas of those who believe that all of man’s actions are predetermined by God, as well as opposing views, which maintain that man’s will is free. He reaches the conclusion that whoever delves into this question must fall into error.”

In Talmud and Midrash. “The doctrine of free will, expressed in the idea that man is free to choose between good and evil, was at the core of Pharisaic outlook. Josephus indeed characterises the differences between the Pharisees and their Sadducean and Essene opponents as between those who accepted both the freedom of man and divine providence (the Pharisees), those who ascribed everything to chance, denying providential guidance (the Sadducees), and those who denied human freedom, maintaining a doctrine of predestination (the Essenes).”

In Modern Jewish Thought. Mordecai Kaplan believes that the idea of free will as it was formulated in the past is out of step with the spirit of the present which looks for causality in everything. He therefore interprets the doctrine of free will as the expression of the idea that there can be no responsibility without freedom. The problem of freedom therefore becomes a spiritual one having to do with the significance of individuality and selfhood on the one hand, and liberation of personality from self-worship and desire for power, on the other.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol 7, 1971, pp. 126 - 132).

And so it is that our search through religious literature led us to nowhere. Theologians of all persuasions, from ancient time to the present, have embraced the belief in free will, not because God has revealed it to be so, but because they reasoned that this is the only way to reconcile man's moral responsibility for his actions and God's notion of divine justice.

This places them at odds with science. As we’ve seen, the latest scientific discoveries, which we established are both credible and irrefutable, tell a different story. It is not free will that determines who will or will not be saved, but one’s own genes and make-up.

This raises serious questions about the theologians' credibility. But all is not lost, for we are yet to look at the wisdom of the academic theologians. Since they are not bound by religious dogma, and always speak the truth with authority, they must surely have found the answer and come to the rescue of their religious counterparts.

ACADEMIC SOURCES

Two academic theologians who published their views in the prestigious *Sophia* magazine gave a new twist to this debate recently. First, David Basinger, of John Wesley College, Michigan, said:

“The orthodox (classical, traditional) Christian God is usually described as a transcendent, infinite, totally self-sufficient being. It should therefore not be surprising that orthodox Christians affirm the following four statements: (1) God exists, (2) God is omnipotent, (3) God is omniscient, and (4) God is wholly good. But such theists also acknowledge that, (5) Evil exists.

Some philosophers have claimed that to affirm (1-5) is self contradictory. The orthodox Christian, it is argued, must deny one of the five statements in question or abandon his belief in the existence of the orthodox God. In response, the Free Will Defence (FWD) is often proposed. This theodicy has a number of variants, but the most sophisticated seem to incorporate the following line of reasoning:

(6) God cannot bring it about that a moral agent (human or non-human) do X and yet X be freely chosen.

(7) Free choices can result in either good or evil consequences.

(8) Therefore, an *omnipotent* God cannot create any co-possible set of free moral agents without also bringing about the possibility of evil.

...

(14) The existence of a created universe containing moral agents who freely perform both good and evil actions and contains more good than evil overall is a more valuable state-of-affairs than the existence of a created universe containing only robots who must always do what is right or a state-of-affairs in which

there is no created universe at all . . . A number of these premises can be (have been) challenged most notably (6) and (14). But my purpose is not to discuss the soundness, nor even the validity, of (6-20). I am concerned rather with the relationship between the concept of divine omnipotence entailed by the FWD and the concept of divine omnipotence implicit in orthodox Christian thought. I shall argue that these two concepts are fundamentally incompatible and that, even if such were not the case, the FWD would be of very limited apologetical value for the orthodox Christian theist . . .

The FWD (free will defence) is normally proposed to circumvent well known problems surrounding the affirmation of (a-c). The basic strategy, we have seen, is to attempt to transfer responsibility for the possibility (or actual occurrence) of gratuitous evil from God to free moral agents by denying that God can bring it about that moral agents always freely make the decisions he desires them to make (i.e., by affirming (6)).

But if the free will accorded moral agents is responsible for the possibility (or actual occurrence) of gratuitous evil, in what sense can it be said that God maintains control over his created universe? . . . According to the FWD, because God *cannot* bring it about that moral agents always make the free choice he desires of them, God cannot create any copossible set of free moral agents without also bringing about the possibility of gratuitous evil for which he is not responsible. In other words, the Free Will Defender must acknowledge that in any given universe containing free moral agents, some events might occur which his God does not desire but cannot prohibit (e.g., instances of gratuitous evil resulting from the free choices of moral agents) . . . I believe the FWD successfully demonstrates that no being can both create a world containing free moral agents and insure that that such agents will always freely choose to do right (i.e., successfully demonstrate that the Free Will God cannot create just any logically possible state-of-affairs he can conceive) . . . We must conclude then that the FWD has functioned as an abused overused apologetic tool for the orthodox Christian. As a response to the traditional logical problem of evil, it is an irrelevant solution to the main issue and a trivially true response to the issue to which it is usually addressed. This is not to deny that the concept of a FWD is coherent. But even this fact is of limited value to the orthodox Christian since the concept of a Free Will God is incompatible with the type of omnipotent being to which such a theist must give allegiance.” (“Christian Theism and the Free Will Defence”, *Sophia*, Vol. 19, July 1980, pp. 20-33).

There are a number of problems with Basinger’s theology. First, as you may have noticed, he contrasts man’s free will with God’s omnipotence, rather than with predestination. Why so? Because predestination is linked with salvation, and salvation is not a topic of discussion among academics. To paraphrase the words of one of their own, who said, “Many people would sooner die than think. In fact they do” (Bertrand Russell, *Thinking about thinking*) - Academics would sooner die than acknowledge salvation. In fact they do.

Second, Basinger’s conclusions are based entirely on his own reasoning. Not once did he refer to the Bible to support his views. He believes that he can find the truth about God, human beings and the universe without looking, at least out of curiosity, into those books which are said to be inspired by God. This is what passes as academic wisdom these days.

Third, given his mastery of the Scriptures, not unexpectedly, he makes sweeping generalizations which are contrary to what the Bible teaches. He assures us that: “no being can both create a world containing free moral agents and insure that such agents will always freely choose to do right”, because such a world can only contain “robots”. Had he known the power of God and His plan for mankind, or the history of Christianity, he may have understood why thousands of people have given their lives to become “robots” in a world which contains no evil, yet in which they enjoy complete freedom of the will.

Basinger says that the present world is perfect because human beings have free will. Their ability to commit evil is his guaranty of that. Now, given the fact that they have used their freedom to bring the world to its present sorry state, is this really such a great virtue? Would it not have been better if human beings had been conditioned by God to always do what is right, just, good, true, and live in a harmonious, clean and peaceful world, than to benefit from such freedom and live in a world in which the law of the jungle prevails?

Why is it imperative that people commit evil in order to prove that they have freedom of the will? Is it not more reasonable to expect that left on their own, thinking people would use their power of reasoning to create conditions that ensure the preservation of life rather than the wanton destruction we see all around? What do all these things prove? Either that human beings are shortsighted fools, or that they have unwittingly been driven by forces which are inimical to their survival.

Basinger found himself a critic in Thomas P. Flint of the University of Notre Dame ("Divine Sovereignty and the Free Will Defence", *Sophia* 23, July 1984, pp. 41-52).

Unfortunately, his writings exhibit all the weaknesses of Basinger, plus a few of his own. He agrees with Basinger in most points, but takes issue with him in the question of free moral agency and God's omnipotence. He says that these are not incompatible because God had a choice: He could have avoided the situation in which His omnipotence is being questioned by not creating human beings in the first place.

This may be a convenient explanation, but one can hardly answer a fact with a hypothesis. The fact is, God did create the world, placed human beings in it, then allowed them to commit evil and bring catastrophe upon themselves.

The question is why, and how can they get out of it? How can they save themselves from their present sorry condition? Can they do it on their own, through the exercise of their own will power, or do they depend entirely on God's grace for their salvation?

Since no source has given us a satisfactory answer, our only choice is to go directly to the Bible.

THE BIBLICAL CASE FOR FREE WILL

There are not too many passages in the Bible which directly support the idea of free will, but the few that are, are invariably quoted by those who subscribe to this belief. The most often quoted example is found in the New Testament, in one of Apostle Paul's epistles:

Php 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling;

Since men can work out their own salvation, the reasoning goes, they must have free will. Another powerful example, this one in the Old Testament in the book of Deuteronomy, says:

Deu 30:19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

These two statements form the main support for the belief in free moral agency. For people to be able to work out their own salvation or choose between life and death, they must have freedom of the will. Therefore it can be said that this doctrine is based on solid biblical principles. Other examples which support this doctrine, are usually associated with God's warnings that if people commit wrongdoing, and transgress His statutes and commandments, they will be punished. The argument being that He would not punish them if He did not consider them to be morally responsible for their actions. There are many such examples in the Bible, and we cannot look at them all, but here are couples which are typical.

Jer 5:1 "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places If you can find a man, If there is *anyone* who executes judgment, Who seeks the truth, And I will pardon her.

Jer 5:2 Though they say, 'As the LORD lives,' Surely they swear falsely."

Jer 5:3 O LORD, *are* not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, But they have not grieved; You have consumed them, But they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to return.

Jer 5:4 Therefore I said, "Surely these *are* poor. They are foolish; For they do not know the way of the LORD, The judgment of their God.

Jer 5:11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah Have dealt very treacherously with Me," says the LORD.

Jer 5:12 They have lied about the LORD, And said, "*It is not He*. Neither will evil come upon us, Nor shall we see sword or famine.

Jer 5:13 And the prophets become wind, For the word *is not* in them. Thus shall it be done to them."

Jer 5:14 Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts: "Because you speak this word, Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, And this people wood, And it shall devour them.

Jer 5:15 Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," says the LORD. "It is a mighty nation, It is an ancient nation, A nation whose language you do not know, Nor can you understand what they say.

Jer 5:16 Their quiver *is* like an open tomb; They *are* all mighty men.

Jer 5:17 And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, *Which* your sons and daughters should eat. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds; They shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; They shall destroy your fortified cities, In which you trust, with the sword.

Jer 5:18 "Nevertheless in those days," says the LORD, "I will not make a complete end of you.

Jer 5:19 And it will be when you say, 'Why does the LORD our God do all these *things* to us?' then you shall answer them, 'Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve aliens in a land *that is not* yours.'

In the end, both Israel and Judah paid heavily for their disobedience. The conclusion being that they had freedom of the will and exercised it wrongfully. A conclusion which could also be drawn from the following passage:

Eze 36:17 "Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity.

Eze 36:18 Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols *with which* they had defiled it.

Eze 36:19 So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.

Eze 36:20 When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, "These *are* the people of the LORD, *and* yet they have gone out of His land.'

Eze 36:21 But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.

Eze 36:22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.

Eze 36:23 And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I *am* the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.

The idea that man has free will and is in charge of his own salvation, correlates well with modern philosophy which holds that man is the center of his universe and master of his own destiny. By judicious use of his will, he can either save or destroy himself.

The role of the Holy Spirit has been diminished to the point of almost total exclusion from the process of salvation. As Friedrich Richter pointed out, "In time, the work of the Holy Spirit loses its universal character and is limited to the subjective experience of the individual. Rationalism eventually supplants the Holy Spirit with the spirit of man." (Op. cit., p. 109).

THE BIBLICAL CASE FOR PREDESTINATION

The most obvious examples of predestination also come from Apostle Paul, the one who provided the ammunition for those who believe in free will too.

- Eph 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:
Eph 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Eph 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,
Eph 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,
Eph 1:5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
Eph 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.
Eph 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
Eph 1:8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,
Eph 1:9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,
Eph 1:10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.
Eph 1:11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
Eph 1:12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.
- Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.
Rom 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.
Rom 8:30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

You can see that here, unlike in previous examples in which the words “free will” or “freedom of the will” or “free moral agency” were never used, but merely implied, the word “predestined” is specifically mentioned several times.

Other statements indicate that God has a Book of Life in which He wrote the names of those who are to be saved before the world was created. In other words, they were predestined to be saved before they were born.

- Luk 10:20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."
Mat 25:34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
Php 4:3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.
Rev 17:8 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.

This idea is also found in the Old Testament:

Exo 32:31 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!

Exo 32:32 Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

Exo 32:33 And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

Exo 32:34 Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin."

Other examples that support the idea of predestination include the following:

Mal 1:1 The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

Mal 1:2 "I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved;

Mal 1:3 But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness."

Apostle Paul amplified this in his epistle to the Romans:

Rom 9:13 As it is written, "JACOB I HAVE LOVED, BUT ESAU I HAVE HATED."

Rom 9:14 What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

Rom 9:15 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."

Rom 9:16 So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Rom 9:17 For the Scripture says to the 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."

Rom 9:18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

Rom 9:19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

Rom 9:20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?"

Rom 9:21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Rom 9:22 What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

Rom 9:23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

Rom 9:24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

These examples not only prove predestination, but emphasize the fact that it is the will of God which determines who is to be saved and who is not, rather than the will of man. "He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens." Our problem comes from the fact that Apostle Paul seems to have contradicted himself. Could he be so lost in his thoughts as not to realize that in one place he supported free will and in another place predestination? Something isn't right, but what? Since predestination has a stronger biblical case than free will, we have no choice but to go back to the Bible and examine once again those Scriptures that appear to support free will.

FREE MORAL AGENCY, OR FREE MORAL DECEPTION?

Before we look again at Paul's letter to the Philippians, which assured us that people can work out their own salvation, we will have a brief look at another Pauline statement which just as strongly seems to deny this fact.

Rom 9:30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith;

Rom 9:31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.

Rom 9:32 Why? Because *they did not seek it* by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

Rom 9:33 As it is written: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STUMBLING STONE AND ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND WHOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME."

Here, Apostle Paul speaks of two kinds of righteousness: one attained by faith and another by works of the law. Righteousness by works of the law can be equated with working out one's own salvation: both ideas relying on people's active involvement in working out something that leads to their salvation. Now while work can be a reflection of one's faith ("Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works", James 2:18), work can never generate the faith required for salvation because this is a gift from God: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9). This creates a major problem for those who use Philippians 2:12 as proof of free will in man. How can one work out his own salvation if this is entirely dependent on God's grace and gift of faith? The Scriptures never contradict themselves, yet those who preach free moral agency would have us believe that they do. How then can we explain that statement in the epistle to the Philippians? Let us have another look at it.

Php 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

Php 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

Did you notice the difference? We were naughty here in that we quoted the entire verse rather than just part of it. The result is nothing short of electrifying. All of a sudden the free will case is on a shaky ground. Rather than proving free will, or free moral agency, or whatever they call it, this verse proves the very opposite - it proves predestination?

Those who have used this verse to "prove" freedom of the will have invariably stopped at the word "trembling". They have left out the most important part of the verse, the one which qualifies it and gives it proper meaning: "**for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure**". Now if it is God who, at His own pleasure, puts it in human heart to will and to do something, how can anyone claim that they do it out of their own volition? Isn't it rather obvious that whatever human beings do it all comes from God?

What about the example in Deuteronomy, have theologians placed a veil over people's eyes with this one too? Let's see.

Deu 30:15 "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil,

Deu 30:16 in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

Deu 30:19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

Deu 30:20 that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

Again, can you see the miraculous metamorphosis taking place when we look at the whole passage rather than just part of it, and do a little independent thinking? When God set before His people life and death, He did not give them a choice between one or the other, He **commanded** them to choose life. Now I suggest to you that a command is not a choice.

Think of a parent who places an apple and a pear in front of his child, then commands him to choose the apple. If the child stretches out his arm to take the pear he gets a smack on his hand. The father repeats the exercise as many times as it takes for the child to learn the lesson and always take the apple. Now is that a choice? This is exactly what our heavenly Father does with us, His children. He places life and death before us, and then commands us to choose life. Every time we choose death by sinning, He chastens us, and then gives us a new chance. Notice:

Heb 12:1 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,

Heb 12:2 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.

Heb 12:3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Heb 12:4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

Heb 12:5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "MY SON, DO NOT DESPISE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD, NOR BE DISCOURAGED WHEN YOU ARE REBUKED BY HIM;

Heb 12:6 FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CHASTENS, AND SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

Heb 12:7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

Heb 12:8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

Heb 12:9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

Heb 12:10 For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness.

Heb 12:11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

God places life and death before His children, then chastens and trains them until they learn their lesson. Is it not clear then that when God commands people to follow a certain course of action, they have little freedom but to obey? Deuteronomy is another example of a Scripture that has been used for the wrong purpose. Like Philippians, rather than proving free will, it proves predestination. Now what about the other examples? Again, let us have a look at them in their context.

Jer 5:1 "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places If you can find a man, If there is *anyone* who executes judgment, Who seeks the truth, And I will pardon her.

Jer 5:2 Though they say, 'As the LORD lives,' Surely they swear falsely."

Jer 5:3 O LORD, *are* not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, But they have not grieved; You have consumed them, But they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to return.

Jer 5:4 Therefore I said, "Surely these *are* poor. They are foolish; For they do not know the way of the LORD, The judgment of their God.

Jer 5:11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah Have dealt very treacherously with Me," says the LORD.

Jer 5:12 They have lied about the LORD, And said, "*It is not He*. Neither will evil come upon us, Nor shall we see sword or famine.

Jer 5:13 And the prophets become wind, For the word *is not* in them. Thus shall it be done to them."

Jer 5:14 Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts: "Because you speak this word, Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, And this people wood, And it shall devour them.

Jer 5:15 Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," says the LORD. "It is a mighty nation, It is an ancient nation, A nation whose language you do not know, Nor can you understand what they say.

Jer 5:16 Their quiver *is* like an open tomb; They *are* all mighty men.

Jer 5:17 And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, *Which* your sons and daughters should eat. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds; They shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; They shall destroy your fortified cities, In which you trust, with the sword.

Jer 5:18 "Nevertheless in those days," says the LORD, "I will not make a complete end of you.

Jer 5:19 And it will be when you say, 'Why does the LORD our God do all these *things* to us?' then you shall answer them, 'Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve aliens in a land *that is not yours*.'

Now notice what happens if we add the next four verses to this passage:

Jer 5:20 "Declare this in the house of Jacob And proclaim it in Judah, saying,

Jer 5:21 'Hear this now, O foolish people, Without understanding, Who have eyes and see not, And who have ears and hear not:

Jer 5:22 Do you not fear Me?' says the LORD. 'Will you not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, By a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, Yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it.

Jer 5:23 But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; They have revolted and departed.

Jer 5:24 They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

If "this people has a defiant and rebellious heart", who made them that way if not God? Remember: "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; he turns it wherever He wishes." (Prov. 21:1), and, "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." (Jer. 10:23). But also: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it? I, Jehovah, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." (Jer. 17:9-10). The next example tells us very clearly who determines what kind of heart is in human beings and how that can be changed. We will not quote again Ezekiel 36:17-23 but will go straight to verses 24 to 36 of this chapter.

Eze 36:24 For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.

Eze 36:25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

Eze 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Eze 36:27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.

Eze 36:28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

Eze 36:29 I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you.

Eze 36:30 And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations.

Eze 36:31 Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that *were* not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations.

Eze 36:32 Not for your sake do I do *this*," says the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!"

Eze 36:33 "Thus says the Lord GOD: "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable *you* to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt.

Eze 36:34 The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by.

Eze 36:35 So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities *are now* fortified *and* inhabited.'

Eze 36:36 Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places *and* planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*."

As long as the people had a heart of "stone" they continued to go after other gods, but when God put "**a new heart and a new spirit**" in them, they became His people and they no longer departed from His ways. The message could not be clearer: God allows human beings to stumble and see the limitations of their ways until they turn to Him with humility in prayer and worship and admit that apart from Him they can neither survive nor save themselves. Christians can take comfort from the fact that there is no conflict between the latest scientific discoveries and the Bible. The conflict is only between science and those who have been preaching a false doctrine and a false gospel. They have chosen the easy way out of a difficult situation. In spite of all the evidence to the contrary, they have abandoned predestination in favor of free will because this absolved them of any further need to explain divine justice. It became very easy for them to place all the blame on human beings and make them morally responsible for all the evil in the world. Then they sat on their laurels until science came along and exposed their deception.

The problem therefore is not in finding an answer to the question of free will versus predestination - science and the Bible are in agreement that predestination is a fact - but in explaining the notion of divine justice in view of the fact that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:3-4), and that He "shows no partiality" with human beings (Acts 10:34), when we know that some people have been predestined to be saved and others to be damned.

Since human beings have not been able to come up with this explanation, our only choice is to go before the throne of God and seek the answer directly from Him. This is what we intend to do now.

HEAVENLY SUPPER

"It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Cor. 12:1-4).

The occasion: a meeting of the Imperial Executive. The location: God's Imperial Palace. The place: the Banquet Hall. Around a horseshoe shaped table, the guests are seated on the outside and the attendants are serving them from the inside.

At the head of the table, shining like the sun, God Almighty is flanked on the right by Jesus Christ and on the left by the Holy Spirit. The guests, shining like stars, include Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Elijah, Daniel, Job, other patriarchs and prophets, John the Baptist, the Apostles, other saints.

The attendants, impeccably dressed and moving graciously, are serving exquisite, mouth-watering delicacies. When I asked one of them why it looked like a Chinese banquet, he said that it just happened to be the turn of the Chinese to provide the food and the Japanese the drinks. Last time it was Italian food and German drinks. Next time it will be Indian food and Australian drinks. Each nation has a chance to show its culinary expertise and delicacies.

When the banquet is over, he added, you will sit down with us and enjoy some of these delicacies too. The meal was conducted in a cordial atmosphere, with toasts being offered by various speakers. Wherever one looked, the eye was dazzled by architectural splendor never seen by human eye.

A round ceiling, decorated with exquisite paintings, was resting on ornamental double columns which formed private alcoves between them. In one of these alcoves, a chamber orchestra filled the air with soft soothing melodies. From another alcove, I watched and took note of the proceedings.

In the middle of the ceiling, a glass cupola revealed a deep blue sky and soaring colorful birds.

The room, located on the second floor, offered a beautiful panorama of colors from landscaped beds of flowers and tropical plants. A few hundred meters away, white sandy beaches and a sea of crystal clear water stretched almost as far as the eye could see. In the far background, however, one could faintly see the outlines of snow capped mountain picks.

From the Palace, a river of living water made its way towards the sea just as the Bible explains.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Rev 22:2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

On the beach, people were sunbathing, surfing and frolicking in the water. A group of children were playing with fish which instead of running away seemed to enjoy their company. Some children were performing balancing acts on the back of whales and dolphins.

Near the Palace, in an open field, deer, gazelles and lions were grazing peacefully together just as the Scriptures say the Kingdom of Heaven will be like.

Isa 11:6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them.

Isa 11:7 The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

Isa 11:8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

Isa 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.

A little dog and a couple of deer kids were playing a catch-me game. Wouldn't it be wonderful if animals, people's pets, were given a place in the Kingdom of Heaven?

I remembered a discussion between a lady and her priest regarding the fate of animals. Her little dog, which she loved, died in an accident. She asked her priest whether she will ever see it again. No, he said, "because animals have no souls and cannot go to heaven. They are here for our use, and when they die they are finished."

She became very upset and started crying. Her friend, who was sitting nearby, tried to console her: "Most certainly animals go to heaven."

"How would you know, said the priest?"

"Because without pets heaven would not be heaven!"

He walked away pondering upon the woman's answer.

Another priest told me once that when he was a seminarian it was only in the third year that he was introduced to the Bible. Most of their time was taken by learning the church's doctrines and how to administer the parish. This explains why priests of mainstream religions are so weak in the Scriptures.

So, what is the truth, has God created the enormous variety of life forms in the animal world for our enjoyment in this temporary world only, and will He deny us such pleasures in His eternal Kingdom? Is it unreasonable to think that God will rejoice in making His children happy by reuniting them with their pests from this life? After all, did not Jesus Christ say that with God all things are possible? (Matt 19:26). But what about the soul, if animals have no soul how could they be resurrected for the Kingdom of God?

The answer is not difficult to find if people leave out their preconceived ideas and accept the Bible to its face value. When God created the world and breathed life into His creatures, He used the same word '*nefesh*', meaning soul, for both animals and humans. This is what the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says:

“In its most ordinary present day usage, the term soul (Lat. anima), when used alone, refers to the human soul; to say soul is to mean human soul. If one intends to speak about other sorts of soul, he uses expressed qualifiers; e.g., he says plant soul, or animal soul. There is nonetheless a **use of the term soul that means simply a principle of life**, or a source of life activities, at least that of nourishing. According to this usage, soul designates the mark of a living thing, or what separates the living from nonliving.” (*New Cat. Enc.*, 1967, Vol. 13, p.447).

So, use of the term soul simply means a principle of life for both humans and animals. And here is what the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* says:

“The personality was considered as a whole in the biblical period. Thus the soul was not sharply distinguished from the body. In biblical Hebrew the words *neshamah* and *ruah* both meant “breath” and *nefesh* refers to the person or even the body (cf. Num. 6:6). (*Enc. Jud.* 1971, Vol. 15, p.172).

If the same term refers to both person and body, it can refer as much to humans as to animals. Now compare this with *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies*:

“The animal life, or that principle by which every animal, according to its kind, lives; hence life, vital principle, animal spirit, which is often translated soul, or spirit . . . The rational soul, mind, *animus*, as the seat of the feelings, affections, emotions of various kinds.”

If soul is the seat of feelings and affections, then clearly animals have soul. Any observant pet owner would tell you that animals have feelings and affections, and show signs of pleasure, anger, curiosity and intelligence. This is confirmed by *Vine’s Expanded Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

“Soul *Psuche* denotes the breath, the breath of life, then the soul, in its various meanings: (a) the natural life of the body, Matt. 2:20; Luke 12:22; Acts 20:10. . . Lev. 17:11 . . . (h) persons, individuals, Acts 2:41, 43; Rom. 2:9; of animals, Lev. 24:18, lit., “soul for soul”. . . (j) an animate creature, human or other, I Cor. 15:45; Rev. 16:3, . . . The language of Hebrew 4:12 suggests the extreme difficulty of distinguishing between the soul and the spirit, alike in their nature and in their activities.”

Here we have a very important observation, and admission that people have not been able to distinguish between soul and spirit; but more on this later. First let us look at what Solomon, one of the wisest men who ever lived, recorded in the Bible about humans and animals:

Ecc 3:18 I said in my heart, "Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are *like* animals."

Ecc 3:19 For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all *is* vanity.

Ecc 3:20 All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.

Solomon saw no difference between men and animals - they both go in the same place. So then, if people go to heaven is it unreasonable to expect that animals could go to heaven too, or at least people's pets? The fact is that as in so many other points, theologians have misunderstood the role of the soul too. They have confused 'soul' with 'spirit' and 'Holy Spirit'.

All living things, human and animal, have soul, but not all have a spirit. The Bible speaks of the spirit in man as distinct from his soul:

Job 32:8 But *there is a spirit in man*, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.

Zec 12:1 The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the **spirit of man** within him:

Zec 12:10 "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 on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

Zec 13:2 "It shall be in that day," says the LORD of hosts, "*that* I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the **unclean spirit** to depart from the land.

Notice how idolatry is linked with “unclean spirits” and the Holy Spirit with the “Spirit of grace and supplication”. Human beings are under the influence of one or the other at all times. Here is further proof:

Num 14:24 But My servant Caleb, because **he has a different spirit in him** and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.

1Sa 16:14 But the **Spirit of the LORD** departed from Saul, and a **distressing spirit** from the LORD troubled him.

Job 15:11 *Are* the consolations of God too small for you, And the word *spoken* gently with you?

Job 15:12 Why does your heart carry you away, And what do your eyes wink at,

Job 15:13 That **you turn your spirit against God**, And let *such* words go out of your mouth?

Job 15:14 "What is man, that he could be pure? And *he who* is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?

Job 15:15 If *God* puts no trust in His saints, And the heavens are not pure in His sight,

Job 15:16 How much less man, *who* is abominable and filthy, Who drinks iniquity like water!

From these Scriptures we can draw the following conclusions:

1. In their natural state, there is no difference between humans and animals - they all have a soul which keeps them alive.

2. Before they repent and are 'born again', human beings are also under the influence of spirits. These could be benign or “unclean” or disobedient. These cannot be confused with the soul, for we know that such spirits can depart from human beings without causing their death. When the soul departs however, so does life.

3. Of the three - soul, spirit and Holy Spirit - only the last guarantees eternal life in the Kingdom of God. The other two are not immortal, though God can make them so. Ezekiel 18:4 and 18: 20, tell us that the souls that sin shall die, while Revelation 20:10, Ezekiel 28:18 and Jude 1:6-7 tell us that the Devil and his rebellious spirits will be destroyed into a great lake of fire at the end of this world.

Human beings take on the character of the spirit by which they are guided. Jesus Christ told His disciples that, in their natural state, they have no chance of making it into the Kingdom of God.

Mat 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Mat 18:2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,

Mat 18:3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Even the disciples who followed Jesus did not have a guaranteed place in heaven in their natural state.

Luk 13:1 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

Luk 13:2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things?

Luk 13:3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

Luk 13:4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem?

Luk 13:5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

The following passage makes it even clearer that human beings are possessed by hostile spirits that are not conducive to eternal life before conversion:

Luk 9:51 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,

Luk 9:52 and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him.

Luk 9:53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was *set* for the journey to Jerusalem.

Luk 9:54 And when His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"

Luk 9:55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.

Luk 9:56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save *them*." And they went to another village.

This is why human beings need the presence of the Holy Spirit to be able to come out of the disastrous condition in which they had fallen as the result of sin. Animals do not sin. Nor could they take a conscious decision to repent and be baptized in order to receive the Holy Spirit. They only do what God has put it in their hearts to do, unlike human beings who often do what they ought not to.

So while all living things need a soul to be alive, human beings, made of carnal nature, come under the influence of disobedient or unclean spirits from the moment they are born. Here is proof from both the Old and the New Testaments.

Psa 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

Rom 7:23 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**.

Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Rom 7:25 I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Rom 8:1 *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.*

Rom 8:2 For **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death**.

Rom 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

Rom 8:4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Rom 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Rom 8:6 For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

Rom 8:7 Because **the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be**.

Rom 8:8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Rom 8:10 And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Rom 8:12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

Rom 8:13 For **if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live**.

Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Rom 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

Rom 8:17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

Rom 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Rom 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

Rom 8:20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope;

Rom 8:21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Rom 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Rom 8:23 Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

Jesus Christ was a Man born of carnal nature like you and me, but He had the seed of the Holy Spirit in Him from conception, and that gave Him the power to keep under control the pulls of carnal nature and withstand Satan's temptations.

As humans grow and become conscious of their condition, and become aware of the possibility of eternal life in a better world, they must ask God to grant them the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). The act of repentance, conversion, baptism and laying on of hands by people who possess the Holy Spirit results in them receiving the Holy Spirit too. From then on they begin to develop a new character, one which eventually allows them to become "free moral agents" in the Kingdom of God, not in this world. In this world no one is a free moral agent. People are either guided by their natural rebellious spirit, or by God's Holy Spirit.

The presence of the Holy Spirit is what makes Christianity different from other religions. True Christianity, that is. Other religions have no such concepts. That is why the Bible says that there is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved:

Act 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

Act 4:9 If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,

Act 4:10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

Act 4:11 This is the 'STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED BY YOU BUILDERS, WHICH HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.'

Act 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Animals do not need to go through trials in order to develop a new character. They are led by instinct, not by spirits, and God can change that, without the need for repentance, baptism and laying on of hands. The Scriptures make it clear that in the new world, where there will no longer be disobedient spirits, human beings would have developed a new character, and animals will be given a new instinct.

Isa 65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

Isa 65:18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem *as a* rejoicing, And her people a joy.

Isa 65:19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.

Isa 65:20 "No more shall an infant from there *live but a few* days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner *being* one hundred years old shall be accursed.

Isa 65:21 They shall build houses and inhabit *them*; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

Isa 65:22 They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, *so shall be* the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

Isa 65:23 They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble; For they *shall be* the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them.

Isa 65:24 "It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.

Isa 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust *shall be* the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the LORD.

Many animals and pets have suffered grievously at the hands of cruel people. They too demand their justice. The Kingdom of God cannot be established until all injustices and injuries done to any of God's creatures have been atoned for.

Jesus Christ said "for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment." (Matt 12:36). If men will give account for every idle word, how much more will they give account for every evil thing that they have done? Therefore people ought to be careful how they treat their animals, for in the Day of Judgment they will certainly give account of their actions.

As I was meditating on these matters in my hiding place in the alcove, it occurred to me that being so close to the Father and the whole Heavenly Executive I could go and discuss these things with Them. That is, if I gathered enough courage to go and present myself, in my filthy condition, before them. But when I turned around and looked at the Father, He was looking at me with a benign smile as if to say: "Son who do you think has put these thoughts into your head? What you thought is perfectly all right. In My Kingdom there is certainly enough room for My children's pets too."

At that time one of the attendants approached the Father and said: "Father, have you seen what the children have been doing lately?"

"What son?"

"Can You come to the window to see?"

As the meal was finished and it was time to clean the tables, the Father said: "All right, let us go to the window and see".

In an opening, on the side of the palace, a group of children had gathered an array of animals and were performing a show that would have put to shame any earthly circus. Two of them were racing a horse and a giraffe, apparently in an attempt to find out which run the fastest. It was a dead heat, though I think the giraffe had just stuck its neck in front. But the animals did not appear to over extend themselves. I think they were more concerned not to bounce the children off their back than to set new records.

Other children were playing a balancing act on a beam high up between two tall trees. Below them, a group of alpacas were forming a soft landing bed. As I looked closer to see why they were falling down so easily, I realized that the slippery beam was not a beam at all but a giant anaconda snake stretched out between two trees.

Other children were flying through the air like trapeze artists, being propelled by the swinging heads of giraffes set up in a wide circle. Some of the heads did not seem to belong to giraffes at all but to prehistoric animals like dinosaurs. Indeed, their huge and cumbersome bodies were largely hidden by the forest, but their heads and necks were surprisingly agile for their size.

Then one of the children noticed the distinguished audience at the window and alerted the other children. They all stopped playing, ran towards the window, knelt down and bowed their heads in a sign of worship and respect. Amazingly, the animals followed suit, knelt behind, and they too bowed their heads.

After a few minutes, the children looked up, and the Father smiled, clapped His hands, and said: "Well done children!" The other guests clapped too. The children stood up, waved their hands, and took off in the direction of the lake, running, shouting and calling on their pets to follow them. When they reached the lake, they playfully started scrubbing and washing their pets in a cacophony of joyful noises. On the shore, a little piglet was crying his heart out trying to say something, but no one seemed to notice. Then a little girl saw him, came near and asked, "What's the matter, babe?"

"I can't swim, I can't swim!"

"C'mon dear, I will teach you how to swim".

"Promise you won't let me drown?"

"You promise to play with me afterwards?"

"I will, I will," said the piglet.

"Then I promise not to let you drown."

So they went into the water and disappeared among the other children and animals.

By this time, the guests had returned to their places and were getting ready for the business section of the meeting. Much as I would have liked to continue watching the children and their pets at play, I had to settle down in my corner and take notes of the proceedings. So here they are, an eyewitness account of heavenly proceedings.

HITLER'S JUDGMENT

The Father began by calling everyone to attention. He made a few comments about the wonderful meal, the great service; the “unexpected” show presented by the children, and then said, “Let us begin by reviewing the proceedings in the Judgment Hall”.

Looking at Apostle Peter, He said, “Last time we decided that you, being the Apostle to the ‘circumcised’, should judge Hitler, the man who caused the holocaust among your people, while Paul, the Apostle to the ‘uncircumcised’ should judge Stalin, the man who decimated the Christians. So how has it been going?”

“Wonderfully, Father. At times it was almost comical. But I think we should see the proceedings on the screen.”

A virtual reality film, projected widely on a wall, showed Hitler raging and extolling the achievements of his great empire, one which “he had built with his own hands, but which was betrayed and dismantled by an inferior race, the rotten Jews, and sold to the filthy Bolsheviks.”

“It wasn’t all that great if it was so easily dismantled and sold by a handful of people, was it? And how did this ‘inferior race’ do this to your empire” asked Peter.

“They did it through an international conspiracy organized by the Jewish bankers and media moguls”.

“Those Jewish bankers of whom you said you would wipe off the face of the earth if they started another war against your nation?”

“Well, I said that earlier in my reign, but I did not really think they would actually do it to us again as they did in the First World War.”

“And why did they do these things to you?”

“Because we stood in the way of their empire.”

“What empire?”

“Don't you know it?”

“No, I don't, but I am sure you will enlighten me.”

“The Bolshevik empire. What do you think that was all about?”

“What?”

“It was a Jewish empire in disguise. The idea was Jewish, the founders were Jewish, the first government was dominated by the Jews, the security apparatus was in Jewish hands, and the finances came from the Jews.”

“Given the problems they had among the Gentiles, could you blame them for wanting to establish a communist empire in which brotherhood and co-operation was emphasized and religion and nationalism were abolished?”

“Brotherhood and co-operation? They treated their subjects, their supposed brothers, worse than we treated our slaves.”

“Could that be possible? What was the difference between their empire and yours?”

“We were national socialists, and they were internationalists. They emphasized the supposed equality of all nations while we emphasized the superiority of our nation. Those who obeyed us did very well under our rulership.”

“Why do you say ‘supposed equality’?”

“They pretended to be equal, but in fact their subjects became slaves in their own lands.”

“What is worse, being a slave in your own land or being burned in an oven?”

“Ah, there you are, you fell victim to their propaganda too. We never burned healthy people. We weren't fools; we needed them for work. We only burned the sick, the weak, the old, the young, the gypsy, the homosexuals, the communists, and the subversives.”

“Is that all?”

“Absolutely!”

“And the Jews?”

“That goes without saying. They were not people, they were sub-humans.”

“What about the other ‘sub-human’ people, what would you have done with them if you had won the war?”

“Oh, I would have built a wonderful civilization. My superior Aryan people would have ruled the world and the other races would have gained their pleasure from serving them. As the song goes: ‘Germany uber alles’”.

“And the Americans, what would you have done to them?”

“Well, if they had behaved and played by the rules, they would have retained most of their country and lived in peace.”

“What rules, and what part of the country would they have lost?”

“The rules set by me and my generals. They would have had to stop meddling in other people’s affairs, would have renounced any pretence of greatness, and would have accepted the size of army and navy I would have dictated for them. I would have been quite generous to them. They would have lived safely in their own land and never would anyone have invaded them. We would have been neighbors.”

“Oh, how is that?”

“Well, you see, the southern belt of their States, from Florida to California, plus northern Mexico, Hawaii and their other overseas possessions, would have made a wonderful colony for my generals and their families.”

“All that land for just a few generals and their families?”

“Are you kidding? My whole nation would have become a garrison of generals. How do you think we would have been able to keep in submission those inferior Slavic races from the Balkans to the Pacific?”

“Those races that were going to get their pleasure from serving your Aryans?”

“Precisely!”

“And the British, what would you have done to them?”

“Oh, Britain without America would have been nothing. But I would have been generous to them too. I would have allowed them to live peacefully in their island. Without their empire, of course. They would have been governed by a national socialist government, and on their throne there would have been a friendly monarch.”

“Which one?”

“The Duke of Windsor, of course.”

“And France?”

“France would have become part of my Greater Germany. The French Empire, like the British, would have been incorporated into my Reich. What a world of happiness that would have been.”

“How unfortunate that those ‘inferior races’ dismantled your Reich.”

“Yeah, I knew you would understand me. That’s the most unfortunate thing that happened in the history of the world.”

“Do you regret any of the things you have done?”

“Like what?”

“Like what you did to the Jews?”

“The Jews? Regret? Yes, I regret! I regret I did not start earlier and finish them off.”

“Why did you hate them so much? What have they done to you?”

“What have they done to me? It is not what they’ve done to me; it is what they have done to the world? They killed Christ, didn’t they?”

“But Christ forgave them, why didn’t you?”

“Forgive them? Me? What do you think I am God? I never forgive anyone. Certainly I would never forgive those filthy mongrels.”

“So you do not repent of anything you have done in your life, do you?”

“Repent, forgive! Why don’t you ask me to go embrace and kiss them too? Never! I will never give them the pleasure of touching me, or even coming near me, even if I have to spend my life in a concentration camp and end up in an oven as they did.”

“They must be heart-broken to hear you say that. Nevertheless, as you have spoken, so it shall be done. You shall spend your life in a concentration camp until you are old, then you shall end up in an oven like your prisoners. And while you are there, some of your own doctors and fellow prisoners will perform on you the kind of medical experiments you performed on your prisoners. Like castrating you and cutting off limbs from you, all live and anaesthetized, then giving cold showers in the dead of winter, so that you may know how your prisoners felt. Then, as I said, when you are old and no longer fit for anything, you will be finished off in an oven alive, and your memory shall be wiped off from the land of the living forever. That should atone for the sins you committed against mankind and God’s creation.”

“This is how we finished the judgment of this fiend Father”, said Apostle Peter. “We gave him the opportunity to defend himself, yet all he did was to sink even deeper in the morass of his horrible crimes. We found no redeeming features in him at all. We had no choice but to finish him off that way.”

“You did well, Peter. I don’t think anyone would have relished the thought of meeting that creature even in the furthest corners of the universe. Had you decided otherwise, you would have had to do a lot of explanation to those who were his victims”, said the Father and adjourned the meeting until next time.

STALIN'S JUDGMENT

At the next meeting, the Father asked Apostle Paul how Stalin's judgment went.

"Quite an event, Father." Stalin's fury was against the Christians just as Hitler's was against the Jews. He filled his labor camps with the Christians just as Hitler filled his concentration camps with the Jews. But shall we see the recording of his judgment?"

"Of course, let us see it."

Stalin was seen in his generalissimo attire being led by two polite attendants to the Judgment Hall, then being offered a seat in front of the judging panel. Before sitting down he ordered the attendants to turn the armchair towards the window. As he sat down, he yawned widely and said: "Umm, I feel as if I've just woken up from a long sleep. Anyway, what are we gathered for here today for? No, don't tell me, let me guess it. We are here to see whom we are nailing to the wall today.

Who are our latest enemies? You know, Beria, I think you did a marvelous job with those stubborn Ukrainian peasants. They drove me crazy with their refusal to join the collective farm. The idea to starve them to death was marvelous. It looked as if everything was natural. Well, we couldn't allow a bunch of peasants to stand in the way of glorious communism. Look, let me make this absolutely clear: the end justifies the means. The future of the world depends on us building a perfect society here in the Soviet Union. This is why we must show no mercy to the 'enemies of the people'.

Hah, 'enemies of the people', what a joke. But it works. It helped me get rid of my enemies. And my enemies are your enemies.

The point is how much is a leader like me worth it? Let's face it, when a country invests so much in a leader, it cannot afford to change him often as they do it in the West. It needs to keep him in power long enough to make that investment worthwhile. This is why when I place someone in a position of leadership in any satellite country, he stays there for life. Or until he crosses me, in which case he is finished before he knows what happened to him.

Communism cannot be built without a wise and strong leadership. Millions of people in the Soviet Union and in the satellite countries, and soon in the whole world, trust me and extol my virtues. This is why no one can stand in my way – all my enemies end up being crushed.

You know, it's funny how the world condemns Hitler for his atrocities against the Jews. I created havoc among my enemies; I destroyed churches, I imprisoned Christians, and filled labor camps in freezing Siberia with all who opposed me. My secret police, as you all know, is more effective than his Gestapo. Put it this way: who needs gas ovens when you have a place like Siberia. Ten times more people perished in our prisons and labor camps than did in their concentration camps, yet no one says a thing about me, while everybody condemns Hitler and his regime. This is what I call a good propaganda machine.

Of course, there is one other major difference between us: we won the war and they lost it. It is the victor's justice, but who dares call it that way? Naturally, the Jews have their brothers - the media barons in America and elsewhere - to speak for them and to denounce Hitler's crimes, whereas my victims have no one to speak for them. But, that's life, it's nobody's fault.

It's a pity that that fool, Trotsky, forced me to lay my hand on him and on a few of his fellow Jews. But in the end it worked out to their advantage. They could claim that they were as much a victim of communism as everyone else.

Can you imagine what would happen if the true history of communism was ever made public? You know, I laughed the other day when someone told me the definition of a communist historian: one who predicts the past. Was it you, Beria, who told me that? It must have been you, for I cannot imagine anyone coming to me with that kind of slander at our historians.

Of course, that is the kind of propaganda Hitler spread about us. That imbecile - he nearly gave it to us. I trusted him and the peace treaty that he signed with us, yet he crossed me and betrayed us all. I couldn't recover for days from the shock of his invasion. When he proved to be unstoppable in the first few months, and we were so close to giving in, I nearly fell on my knees in prayer. Would you believe it, me, the atheist, who abandoned a seminary to become a communist, and killed people for their belief in God, praying to God for help in my hour of need? Don't you think that's funny? Imagine what my enemies would do with this kind of knowledge, but how are they ever going to know about it?

Coming to think about it, would any of you ever betray me? See I trust you with my innermost secrets because I regard you as my friends. Well, I don't think I need to remind you what would happen to you if you ever crossed me? Think of Trotsky. He was a lot stronger than any of you. He had the army under him, but it amounted to nothing, because I had the brains and the ideology. And in this country he who is faithful to the ideology wins. Think what would have happened if Hitler had won the war, where would you all be now? You would all be in big trouble, wouldn't you? Or maybe you would have changed your colors too. Would you? Would you have become traitors and changed your allegiance from communism to National Socialism? I see, you've all lost your voices now.

This is getting serious; why isn't anyone saying anything? Why are you all suddenly afraid to speak?"

Startled by the silence, Stalin turned around and faced the panel. He looked intently at the people behind it, rubbed his eyes, and then looked again. His face turned red and he shouted angrily: "Who are you? I don't recognize any of you?"

The panel remained silent, some smiling in anticipation of what he might do when he realized where he was.

He turned around, walked briskly to the window, pulled the veil aside, and then remained transfixed for a few minutes. He could not believe his eyes. Was it a dream; was it reality, what was this?

Through heavy falling snow he could see the stooped silhouettes of human beings laboring heavily in a Siberian labor camp. Among them, he could recognize many of his friends and comrades in arms: Lenin, Beria, Molotov, others from his Politburo.

Stunned and in disbelief, his legs began to weaken and his face changed from red to pale. He turned around, faced the panel again, and said in a weakening voice: "All right, guys, who are you? Why did you deceive me? Why did you let me reveal all those state secrets? What power do you represent and who conquered my empire and turned things up-side down like this?"

"No one deceived you, Stalin", answered Apostle Paul. "You never gave anyone a chance to speak. Wasn't this the rule in your empire? When you spoke, no one was allowed, no one dared, to interrupt you. So we let you speak your heart out. Out of your own mouth you revealed the crimes of which you are guilty, and the punishment you deserve."

"I see, so this is the judgment of God, is it? I should have known. No earthly power could have overturned my empire. I should have realized that God had a hand in this disaster. Well, if you represent God, and if God really exists, why did you not reveal yourselves to us and stop us from committing all those crimes?"

"God gave everyone an equal chance. It was a matter of trust, faith and belief. God revealed Himself to those who obeyed Him, who loved and worshiped Him, and who endured patiently the trials that you subjected them to. You started well, but then changed and became a deadly enemy to God's people. Like everyone else, you had the Bible, and a lot of people who were willing to show you the way. But instead of listening to them, you tortured them, killed them, and threw them in freezing prisons and concentration camps from which few came out alive. Now it's your turn to taste that medicine."

To everyone's astonishment, Stalin fell on his knees pleading for his life. "I am sorry; I did not know that there would be a judgment. Forgive me, please! If I had known I would not have done what I did."

"But would it be fair to your victims if we forgave you? Nevertheless, since we cannot turn our backs on people who seek forgiveness, we will do a deal with you. We will show you as much mercy and forgiveness as you have shown to all of your victims put together. Surely, that would be enough to save you and your comrades. Fair enough, isn't it?"

"I suppose you expect me to say that this fair, but I know that this won't save us. We never showed mercy and forgiveness to anyone."

"To no one? You mean to say that in all the years that you ruled that empire, you never forgave and showed mercy to anyone?"

"Mercy? We did not build our empire on mercy, we built it on terror! Those who showed mercy to their victims became victims themselves. I do not know how your empire can survive if you built it on mercy?"

"Not only mercy, Stalin, but love, charity, truth, humility, justice, sacrifice, and whatever other virtues there are that make life worth living. Had you tried these things, your "invincible empire" would not have collapsed like a house of cards, or a castle built on sand.

You didn't practice these things because you were evil. You were bent on destroying people not on building them. You deserve harsher punishment than we can give you."

Turning to the guards nearby, Apostle Paul said: "Take this creature out of my sight and put him where he belongs, alongside his beloved friends and comrades in that labor camp. Let them rot in there until their days come to an end and then finish them off in the lake of fire. Then let their names be removed from the Book of the Living and never be heard of again forever."

JESUS' "JUDGMENT"

At the next meeting, Apostle John, who was sitting near Jesus Christ, opened a little magazine and said: "Lord, have you seen what the 'free moral agents' want to do to you?"

"What, John?"

"They want to judge You again."

"Do they? And why, pray tell, would they want to do that to Me?"

"Because You let their little sister die, because You did not stop the massacres in places like Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda, because You allowed famine and disease in the world and, strangely enough, because you gave them the freedom to choose between good and evil."

"Really? And who are those 'free moral agents'?"

"The Seventh Day Adventists."

"The Seventh Day Adventists? Let Me see!"

"Lord, I ... don't ... think it is a good idea to read this."

"Why not?"

"You won't like it. They say nastier things than these."

"Like what?"

"They call Your work a "messy thing", they doubt Your wisdom, they question Your ways, they want to know why You created Satan, why You did not destroy Adam and Eve, why was it important for humans to choose between good and evil, etc."

"Let Me see that magazine" said Jesus angrily as He took it from John's hands. Then He read this article:

"No harps for me" . . . "I have so many questions to ask of Jesus. Why did my older sister have to die when she was born? Why does anybody have to die? I'm angry about death and I want some answers. I'm looking forward to the time when Jesus can tell me why. And what about events like the killings in Bosnia and Somalia and Rwanda, and what of famine and AIDS? Why is there pain and suffering? I believe that Jesus is all-powerful. So if He's all-powerful why can't He - won't He - stop things like Rwanda from happening? Sure there's a war going on between good and evil. But sometimes it seems like evil is winning.

I get really frustrated because I know Jesus could stop it all right now if He wanted to. Which brings me to the main reason why the second coming is important to me. For most of my life I'd thought that when Jesus comes back all the people who ever lived would be judged. I thought that was the reason for the second coming. But it's almost the opposite. I've gradually come to the realization that what is really going to happen is we're going to judge Jesus. We're going to look at Him and ask Him those questions.

Why did He even make Satan? Why did He let sin happen in the first place? Was His way of handling the whole messy business the best way? Why didn't He just wipe Adam and Eve out? Was it really important that human beings be free to choose between good and evil? Look at the massive suffering that's happened in this world because we were given free choice. I'm really looking forward to the second coming of Jesus. I don't expect it to be easy. After all, it's the end of the world. But I will *finally* get to be with Jesus. I can ask Him all those questions. I can thank Him for dying for me. But best of all, I'll be able to relax in His closeness. Jesus is going to be there. And I'm going to be there with Him." (Trudy Rankin, "No Harps for Me", *Signs of the Times*, Vol. 110, No 6, p.43).

"So, this is what those who call themselves My ministers are writing in their publication. And they call it *Signs of the Times*". A more appropriate name would be, *Signs of the Adventist Church*."

"What signs would these be, Lord?"

“Blasphemy, ignorance, Satanism. They plant doubt in people’s hearts about God’s ways and wisdom just as Satan planted doubt in Adam and Eve’s hearts about God’s intentions in the Garden of Eden. And are they so ignorant about the purpose of human life that they don’t know why God created Satan? Don’t they know that human beings have to undergo certain trials in order to qualify for eternal life in a better world? Who can provide those trials if not Satan?”

Like those academic theologians, they consider this world to be a finished product and an end in itself. They do not know that this is a temporary world designed to prepare people for eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Nor do they know the power of God, how He can resurrect people and reward or punish them in accordance with the kind of life they lived. Have they forgotten that before that little girl became their sister she belonged to God and that He can do what He wants with His creation? As for the suffering in the world, has anyone suffered more than I have? Yet did I question God’s ways or complain that He gave Me over to be crucified by wicked people? And for what, for My sins? No, for theirs, yet they want to judge Me again. What did I say in My moment of grief: “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42). And before I gave up My soul, I prayed to the Father and said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (Luke 23:34). Now, instead of being grateful for having had their sins forgiven, and the threat of death removed from them, they question God’s wisdom, and want to judge me again. Well, we shall see who will judge whom.

They think that they are smart by not addressing their questions to God but to Me, thinking perhaps that they are safe from committing blasphemy. No doubt they remember these words of Mine:

Mat 12:30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

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

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

When I was in the world I was the Son of Man. I showed human beings what they could become if they followed Me. At that time, when they did not know who I was, they were forgiven for speaking against Me, for thinking that I was just another person. But now it is different. They know, or should know, that after I was resurrected I became One with My Father. Why do you think I commanded you not to tell anyone who I was when We came down from the mountain? Remember?

Mat 17:9 Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."

It was to save people from committing blasphemy. But after I was perfected and raised to heaven, it became a common knowledge that I was more than the Son of Man, I was the Son of God, I was God. Therefore when they speak against Me now, they offend the Father and the Holy Spirit. And why do they do it? Because they neither know, nor believe the Scriptures. Their ignorance will cause them to lose their salvation.

“Which Scriptures are You referring to, Lord?”

“These:

Rom 9:20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?"

Rom 9:21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

And these:

Ecc 6:3 If a man begets a hundred *children* and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with goodness, or indeed he has no burial, I say *that* a stillborn child *is* better than he—

Ecc 6:4 for it comes in vanity and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness.

Ecc 6:5 Though it has not seen the sun or known *anything*, this has more rest than that man,

Ecc 6:6 even if he lives a thousand years twice—but has not seen goodness. Do not all go to one place?

And these:

Eze 37:3 And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."

Eze 37:4 Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!

Eze 37:5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.

Eze 37:6 I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD." ' ' "

Eze 37:7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.

Eze 37:8 Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but *there was* no breath in them.

Eze 37:9 Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, "Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ' ' "

Eze 37:10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Eze 37:11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'

Eze 37:12 Therefore prophecy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

Eze 37:13 Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.

Eze 37:14 I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*," says the LORD."

Don't these Scriptures and many more, make it clear that this life is not the end of it all? As I said, they don't know that this life is but a preparation for something better, that God will resurrect young and old alike and judge them. The people who have died young are in a better position than those who have grown old and remained ignorant.

These people have not only wasted their life, but also put it to an evil use. Their writings raise doubt in people's hearts about God's power, ways and wisdom. Doubt, being the opposite of faith, is the enemy of Christianity, and the death of humanity. What do the Scriptures say about those who do not believe?

Joh 10:24 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

Joh 10:25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.

Joh 10:26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

Joh 10:27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Joh 10:28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Joh 10:29 My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.

Joh 10:30 I and *My* Father are one."

Joh 10:31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

Joh 10:32 Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

Joh 10:33 The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

Joh 10:34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I SAID, "YOU ARE GODS" '?"

Joh 10:35 If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

Joh 10:36 do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

Joh 10:37 If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me;

Joh 10:38 but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father *is* in Me, and I in Him."

Joh 10:39 Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.

Joh 10:40 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed.

Joh 10:41 Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true."

Joh 10:42 And many believed in Him there.

These people do not believe in Me, for if they did they would believe the Scriptures and would know this:

Isa 65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

Isa 65:18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem *as* a rejoicing, And her people a joy.

Isa 65:19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.

Isa 65:20 "No more shall an infant from there *live but a few* days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner *being* one hundred years old shall be accursed.

Isa 65:21 They shall build houses and inhabit *them*; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

Isa 65:22 They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, *so shall be* the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

Isa 65:23 They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble; For they *shall be* the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them.

Isa 65:24 "It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.

Isa 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust *shall be* the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the LORD.

Had these people understood My parables of the talents (Matt. 25), they would have known that ignorance is not the way to salvation. Those who grow in knowledge and spiritual understanding receive ample reward, but those who make no profit will lose even what they have.

They are asking about the events in Bosnia and Rwanda, and the pain, suffering and evil in the world, and say that, "sometimes it seems like evil is winning." Have I not told them that My Kingdom is not of this world, that these things will happen before I return to take those who believe in Me to where I am? (Matt. 24; John 16, 17).

Why do they want Me to get involved in a world that is not Mine, but Satan's? What did Satan say when he tempted Me?

Luk 4:5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

Luk 4:6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

Luk 4:7 Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."

Luk 4:8 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND HIM ONLY YOU SHALL SERVE.' "

This world was created the way it is and was given over to Satan so that people may aspire for a better world. Those who have set their heart on this world cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Isn't this what the Scriptures say?

Act 14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Jas 5:10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

Jas 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

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

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

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

1Pe 2:22 "WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH";

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

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

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

Luk 12:29 "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind.

Luk 12:30 For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things.

Luk 12:31 But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

Luk 12:32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Luk 12:33 Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.

Luk 12:34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

These people's heart is set on this world, therefore this is what they shall have. And to those who want to judge Me again, and question My ways and My wisdom, this is My answer:

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

Heb 6:5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

Heb 6:6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

ADAM AND EVE'S SIN REVEALED

Lord, what about Adam and Eve? There seems to be a lot of confusion in people's minds about their sin. You saw what the Seventh Day Adventists said:"

"Why did He even make Satan? Why did He let sin happen in the first place? Was His way of handling the whole messy business the best way? Why didn't He just wipe Adam and Eve out? Was it really important that human beings be free to choose between good and evil? Look at the massive suffering that's happened in this world because we were given free choice."

"You know that certain sections of the Bible are written in symbolic language and require interpretation", said Jesus Christ. "Such is the case with the book of Genesis. The tree of life is symbolic, the tree of knowledge of good and evil is symbolic, the snake is symbolic, and so on. But all these things could be understood in light of ulterior developments and revelations.

The idea that the forbidden tree was an apple is a late invention and it is not true. There was no literal tree of life or tree of knowledge of good and evil. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people could just eat of a fruit and attain eternal life? I went into the world to show them that eternal life can be achieved only through the death of the old self and the rebirth of a new person. That way, death no longer has any power over a person.

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

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

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

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

Joh 12:28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, "I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again."

"True Lord, but what these people are saying is that if Adam and Eve had not sinned, if they had not been given the freedom to choose between life and death, there would have been no need for You to come into the world and die, nor for anyone else to die."

"Yes, I know that this is what they are saying, but they say so because they do not know the Scriptures. Does not the Bible tell them that I was predestined to die for the sins of the world before the world was created?"

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

Joh 17:24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me **before the foundation of the world.**

Eph 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,

Eph 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

Eph 1:5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Eph 1:11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

Eph 1:12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Heb 4:3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "SO I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,' " although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

1Pe 1:17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear;
1Pe 1:18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers,
1Pe 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.
1Pe 1:20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you
1Pe 1:21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.
1Pe 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,
1Pe 1:23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

So then, if the works of God were finished from the foundation of the world and I had been foreordained to die for the sins of the world before the world was, if God has chosen His people before the foundation of the world and has determined that they must be born again in order to receive the Holy Spirit and made ready for eternal life, how can anyone say that things could have been different if Adam and Eve had not sinned? Is it not obvious that I died for their sins too, and that they were expected to sin? How did God know that they were going to sin? He knew it from the fact that they did not have the Holy Spirit. They had the spirit of the world, a spirit which is in bondage to Satan and not obedient to God.
Notice:

Rom 8:7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.
Rom 8:8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.
Rom 8:10 And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.
Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.
Rom 8:12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.
Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
Rom 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

"The problem with Adam and Eve was not that they sinned, but that having done so they did not face up to their responsibility. In other words, they did not repent of it, but blamed someone else for it.

Being the first humans they knew that they had a greater responsibility than the people that would follow them. When they sinned, they did not just disobey and dishonor a human being but their Creator God. By preferring Satan's advise to that of their heavenly Father, they elevated Satan to equality with Him. That is why their sin can not be forgiven."

"Lord, we understand this now, but what about the trees? If they were not literal trees, what were they?"

"Aha, you must tell Me this."

They looked at each other and shook their heads as a sign that they had no idea.

"All right boys let us get back to the Bible. What is sin?" said Jesus as He broke the silence.

"The breaking of the law", answered Apostle Paul.

"Right, Paul! Now which law did they break? Let us discuss every commandment.

'You shall have no other gods before Me.' (Ex. 20:2-3). Could they have broken this commandment?"

“They did accept Satan before God, but the context of their rebellion indicates that this was not their sin.”

“Correct! What about the second commandment: ‘You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.’ (Ex. 20:4-6).

“This was not their sin either. They had no reason to make any idols, and probably did not know how to make them anyway.”

“Right again. What about the third commandment: ‘You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.’ (Ex. 20:7).

“No, this wasn’t their sin either” answered Apostle Paul.

“And the fourth commandment? ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.’ (Ex. 20:8).

“Clearly, this was not their sin either”, answered Apostle Thomas.

“Right, Thomas! So then, the first four commandments, which regulate man's relationship with God, were not the cause of Adam and Eve’s fall. Therefore their sin must have come from breaking one of the commandments which regulate human relationships, and since there were no other human beings on earth it must have had something to do with the relationship between them. So what could they have done that constituted such a grievous sin? Which commandment did they break?”

“None of them seem to have been broken, Lord,” said Apostle Thomas again.

“Can you explain, Thomas?”

“Well, the fifth commandment says: ‘Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.’ (Ex. 20:12). They had no human parents, therefore this commandment is ruled out.

The sixth commandment: ‘You shall not murder’ (Ex. 20:13), could not have been broken because they had no one to murder.

The seventh commandment: ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ (Ex. 20:14), could not have been broken because there was no one to commit adultery with. The eighth commandment against stealing (Ex. 20:15), the ninth against bearing false witness (Ex. 20:16), and the tenth against coveting the things that belong to one's neighbor (Ex. 20:17), could not have been broken for exactly the same reasons - there was no one against whom they could have done these things.”

“So they did not sin then?” said Jesus.

“No, Lord, they did sin, but we cannot tell how?”

“Tell Me Thomas, and also the rest of you, were these the only commandments God gave humanity? What about the laws regarding sexual conduct in the book of Leviticus and elsewhere? What did Adam and Eve do immediately after they sinned?”

“They hid themselves from God, they covered their sex organs, and became shameful.”

“Right! Now why do you think they did that Thomas?”

“Perhaps because their sin was of a sexual nature?”

“Precisely! Now what could two human beings - a husband and wife, in this case - do that would constitute sin?”

“Oh, no. I can’t believe it ... they didn’t!”

“They didn’t what, Thomas,” asked Apostle Peter.

“Can’t you see it, Peter?”

“See what?”

Jesus and the Father smiled as the two Apostles engaged in a little fracas.

“Can’t you see why they covered their sex organs and became shameful? They committed sodomy and felt dirty, that’s why.”

They gasped in disbelief and fell back in their seats.

“But what about the Garden of Eden and the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil. What are they, Lord?” asked Thomas.

“Symbolically, the Garden of Eden is the woman” answered Jesus. “Her sexual organ represents the tree of life - that’s where life comes from with human beings. Her anal organ represents the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Good when it is used for the purpose for which God intended it; evil when it is used unnaturally.

Eve allowed Satan to plant doubt in her heart about God’s intentions. He made her feel curious about sodomy. She started wondering why God would want to prevent them from doing something that

would make them wise? The more she toyed with the idea that by sinning they would become wise and immortal like God, the more difficult it became to withstand Satan's influence. In the end she decided to "liberate" herself and her husband from the 'shackles' imposed by God and told Adam about it. Adam shuddered at her suggestion at first, but faced with her rebellion and insistence he relented and did what she wanted.

Now although this sin is not specifically listed among the Ten Commandments, there are plenty of warnings in the Bible of what happens to those who engage in it. This sin is so abhorrent in the eyes of God, that those who practice it place themselves outside the human realm. Nevertheless, there is hope for those who repent of it. Remember what I said when I was into the world?

Mat 11:20 Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent:

Mat 11:21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Mat 11:22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

Mat 11:23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Mat 11:24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

Mat 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.

Mat 11:26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

"So, those who have been entrapped by Satan, but who repent, have nothing to fear - they will be cleansed of their sins through faith like everyone else. I have died for all sinners, and I have power to save all who repent and believe in My power of salvation.

Satan was very fond of this sin. It could have stopped humanity in its tracks before it even had a chance to establish itself. But God intervened and restrained him, and gave humanity another chance. Don't you know what happened in the world by the time of the end? This sin became so widespread, it was even defended by legislation by national and international governing bodies, so that it became a crime to speak against it. Those who did so paid heavily for it. This is why the world had to be cleansed a second time - only that this time it would be by fire not by water."

WHOSE 'TOYS' ARE WE?

Apostle John, who was shuffling through the pages of another magazine, turned to the Father this time and said:

"Father, have You seen what the Charismatics are preaching?"

"What, John?"

"That they are not Your 'toys', and that salvation must be a matter of choice."

"Oh, really? And who are these Charismatics, John?"

"Those whom Paul taught to babble in tongues."

"What are you talking about?" jumped Apostle Paul.

"Don't tell me you do not know what they have done with your writings?" answered Apostle John.

"They have done what? You are in charge of the library and the archives, so tell us."

"They babble like mad when they come together and say that it is the spirit who inspires them to do so."

"Inspired by a spirit they may be, but not by the Holy Spirit. Did I not tell them that if there are people who speak in foreign tongues they must do so in an orderly manner and not unless there are other people who can interpret?"

1Co 14:23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those who are* uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

1Co 14:27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret.

1Co 14:28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.

“O, they have interpreters, no worry about that. They bubble too.”

“But if they babble in incomprehensible tongues, what do they interpret, and who understands them?”

“That is what I would like to know too.”

“That vile creature, Satan, twisted my words and deceived these people just as he deceived Adam and Eve.”

“Let Me read what these Charismatics are saying” said Jesus as He grabbed the magazine from John’s hand.

“Priceless Pearls. Did you make any resolutions this New Year? Is there some old acquaintance, some continuing problem or past failure, that you'd like to forget?

In a court of law, you have to pay the price for the past. New Year resolutions and singing "should auld acquaintance be forgot" won't save you. Even if the judge wants to be merciful, you can't go scot-free. The judge has to make you an example of what happens when people do wrong.

In God's court you can receive both justice and mercy. He wants to make you an example of what happens when people do good. He knows all the problems and all the failings. He longs to make all things new. **But we're not His toys - it has to be our choice. We have to choose** to plead guilty and accept that He paid our price on the cross. **We have to choose** to bury the past and ask Him to make all things new.

"And I will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your case, that you may be acquitted." (David Green, *The Berowra Telegraph*, NSW, May 16, 1996; emphasis added).

“I see”, said Jesus when He finished reading it. “First they are encouraging people to keep Pagan observances such as their ‘New Year’, then they preach that people must be able to choose: “Choose to plead guilty” and “choose to bury the past”, because “we are not His toys - it has to be our choice”.

“Well, if they want to choose I will let them choose. Then I will see how good their choosing has been. This preacher does not know that people can’t choose to be saved, that it has to be an initiative from God:

Joh 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

Joh 6:65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God,

Eph 2:9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

“Like Adam and Eve, they do not want to trust Me and rely on Me for their salvation”, said the Father. “They want to be able to make their own choice - they want to be ‘free moral agents’. So let them be! Satan wanted to be a free moral agent too, and ever since he has been teaching those who listen to him to follow suit.

If they want to be able to choose, we must give them that opportunity. They have already distinguished themselves by ‘choosing’ to babble in tongues, as if I do not understand normal languages. Have I not created people’s tongues? What makes them think that I am happy to listen to their unintelligible utterances?

Since they did not want to be My ‘toys’, they will find out in due course whose ‘toys’ they became.”

With this, the Father adjourned the meeting until next time.

DIVINE JUSTICE

At the next meeting, Abraham, who has been following the proceedings quietly in his corner, looked to the Father and said:

“Father, can I also ask you a question?”

“Of course, My friend!”

“We, who lived in the Old Testament times, are somewhat in the dark about many of these things for we did not have the knowledge that became available in the New Testament. I am still having difficulty understanding one thing. The Scriptures say that You show no partiality with anyone (Rom. 2:11), and that You desire all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4)?”

“Not only do I desire them to be saved, I make sure that they **are** being saved”, said the Father. Notice:

Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

Rom 8:39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“But, Father, if some people are predestined to be saved and others to be damned, doesn't this go against the principle of impartiality?”

“I condemn no one to death, son! They condemn themselves. I cannot save those who do not believe.”

Rom 10:11 For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME."

Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

Rom 10:13 For "WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED."

“Those who do not call on the name of the Lord cannot be saved. Salvation is for those who are righteous, and righteousness comes through faith. You yourself gave them a good example. Have you seen what Paul wrote about you?”

Rom 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?

Rom 4:2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has *something* to boast about, but not before God.

Rom 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Rom 4:4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

Rom 4:5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

Rom 4:6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

Rom 4:7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS ARE FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS ARE COVERED;

Rom 4:8 BLESSED IS THE MAN TO WHOM THE LORD SHALL NOT IMPUTE SIN."

Rom 4:13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

“I understand this Father, and yet the Scriptures also say that faith is a gift of God: ‘For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.’ (Eph. 2:8). Why then is this gift made available to some and not to others?”

“Oh, you are mistaken here, Abraham. This gift is made available to all human beings, but not all of them avail themselves of it. Have a look at this parable.

- Luk 19:12 Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.
- Luk 19:13 So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'
- Luk 19:14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this *man* to reign over us.'
- Luk 19:15 "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.
- Luk 19:16 Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'
- Luk 19:17 And he said to him, 'Well *done*, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'
- Luk 19:18 And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'
- Luk 19:19 Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'
- Luk 19:20 "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief.
- Luk 19:21 For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'
- Luk 19:22 And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, *you* wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow.
- Luk 19:23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'
- Luk 19:24 "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give *it* to him who has ten minas.'
- Luk 19:25 (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.')
- Luk 19:26 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.
- Luk 19:27 But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay *them* before me.' "

“This parable shows that everyone receives the same gift. The next one shows why some people make good use of it while others don't.”

- Mat 13:3 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow.
- Mat 13:4 And as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.
- Mat 13:5 Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth.
- Mat 13:6 But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.
- Mat 13:7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.
- Mat 13:8 But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
- Mat 13:9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"
- Mat 13:10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"
- Mat 13:11 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.
- Mat 13:12 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.
- Mat 13:13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.
- Mat 13:14 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;
- Mat 13:15 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.'

Mat 13:16 But blessed *are* your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;

Mat 13:17 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*.

Mat 13:18 "Therefore hear the parable of the sower:

Mat 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

Mat 13:20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

Mat 13:21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

Mat 13:22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

Mat 13:23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

"Right, Father! So if I understand it right, all human beings receive gifts which they are expected to put to good use and increase their value. Some do and some don't. Those whose seed fall on good ground and bring forth fruits are the ones who are predestined to be saved, and those who have no depth, whose seed falls by the wayside, on stony places or among thorns are the ones who become unfruitful and are damned."

"Right! Now what is wrong with that?"

"But if their fate is determined before they are born, what about those who end up being damned?"

"This has been a great mystery, Abraham. And yet the answer has been in the Scriptures all along.

Take a look at this parable now:

Mat 13:24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;

Mat 13:25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

Mat 13:26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

Mat 13:27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

Mat 13:28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

Mat 13:29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

Mat 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' ' "

"So what does this tell you, Abraham?"

"That some human beings are not your people. But if they are not yours, whose people are they, Father?"

"Well, again, what do the Scriptures say in this regard?"

Joh 8:44 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.

Act 13:10 and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, *you* son of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?"

1Jn 3:8 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.

De. 13:13 Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known. (KJV)

1 Sam 2:12, Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. (KJV)

“But Father, what is the difference between one human being and another, between Your children and Your Adversary’s children? How would one know who is who?”

“The Scriptures tell you the difference. Notice:

Mat 7:13 "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.

Mat 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Mat 7:15 "Beware of **false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.**

Mat 7:16 **You will know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

Mat 7:17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

Mat 7:18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit.

Mat 7:19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Mat 7:20 **Therefore by their fruits you will know them.**

Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Mat 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

Mat 7:23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

“Two important things are emphasized in this passage: first, that human beings are known by their fruits, and second, that although they all look alike on the outside, they are not all human beings on the inside.”

“What are they LORD?”

“Whatever the Scripture calls them:

Act 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Act 20:29 For I know this, that after my departure **savage wolves** will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

Act 20:30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

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

Mat 12:34 Brood of **vipers!** How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Mat 23:13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

Mat 23:14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

Mat 23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Mat 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

Mat 23:24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Mat 23:25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

Mat 23:26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Mat 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness.

Mat 23:28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Mat 23:29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

Mat 23:30 and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

Mat 23:31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

Mat 23:32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' *guilt*.

Mat 23:33 **Serpents, brood of vipers!** How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

"Well, we thought that these were just figures of speech, Father."

"Figures of speech? Do you think that I would allow anyone to call My children 'savage wolves', dogs', 'swine', 'vipers', and the like? We don't play word games in the Bible, son. When I say that someone is a 'savage wolf', a 'dog' a 'swine', or a 'viper', that is what he is at heart.

These are the people who have been predestined to be damned before they were born. They have been taking advantage of My children from the very beginning, causing them all sorts of trials and indignities?"

"But Father, if the Devil and his followers are responsible for these things, why did You not destroy both him and them from the beginning?"

"Because I needed them, son. My children could not have caused the sufferings needed for creating the right character in their brothers - those who were predestined to be saved. My children are known for their love, mercy, humility, cooperation, compassion and spirit of sacrifice, whereas Satan's children are known for their ruthlessness and desire to advance to comfortable positions at the expense of those who stand on their way. Remember what the Scriptures say:

Act 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

Act 14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "**We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.**"

Psa 119:64 The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy; Teach me Your statutes.

Psa 119:65 You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word.

Psa 119:66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge, For I believe Your commandments.

Psa 119:67 **Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.**

Psa 119:68 You *are* good, and do good; Teach me Your statutes.

Psa 119:69 The proud have forged a lie against me, *But* I will keep Your precepts with *my* whole heart.

Psa 119:70 Their heart is as fat as grease, *But* I delight in Your law.

Psa 119:71 *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

Psa 119:72 The law of Your mouth *is* better to me Than thousands of *coins of* gold and silver.

"My children know that this has been the only way of attaining eternal life, but such talk is foolishness with Satan's children. My children hated their life, but Satan's children loved theirs. That is why the first receive eternal life in My Kingdom, while the latter eternal damnation in the lake of fire."

"Now I understand why the following Scriptures speak in these terms about Your righteousness, Father:

Rev 16:5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things.

Rev 16:6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due."

Rev 16:7 And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* Your judgments."

WHO CREATED THE DEVIL?

“Father, would You, please, allow me to ask You just one more question?”

“You may ask Me as many questions as you like, Abraham.”

“What would You have done if Lucifer had not rebelled against You and become Your Adversary? Who would have created the trials needed to develop Your children’s character?”

“Well, if it wasn’t Lucifer it could have been Michael or Gabriel.”

“I do not understand!”

“Isn’t it obvious, son, that I created the Devil? After I created the three leading cherubs I determined that one of them must become My Adversary. And so, I gradually increased their power, beauty and wisdom until one of them snapped. Lucifer became vain, corrupted his ways and compared himself with Me. I then sealed them all in that position: Michael and Gabriel became My great obedient cherubs, and Lucifer My great Adversary. After I unceremoniously cast him down to earth, he mobilized his angels and rebelled against Me again. He wanted to elevate himself to My position, but when he saw that he could not reach Me, he went after My creation. He caused so much havoc in the old world, I had to destroy and cleanse it of its filthiness through a flood. That was the time of Noah’s Flood.

Satan did not realize that in everything he did he was fulfilling My plan. Unfortunately sometimes he went beyond what I expected, causing more damage to the world and more pain to My children that I would have liked. Nevertheless in the end it all worked out well. My children rose to the occasion by withstanding his wiles, thus proving themselves worthy inheritors of eternal life in My Kingdom.

When Satan saw that he could not usurp My position here in heaven, he installed himself “like the Most High” in a temple down on earth, attributing himself My title of “Holy Father”. He did on earth what he could not do in heaven, and from that position he deceived the whole world.”

“Father”, said Apostle John, “if You were in control of this process and it all worked out according to Your plan, why do the ‘free moral agents’ say that Satan created himself? Have You seen what one of their great prophets wrote?”

“GOD DID NOT CREATE THE DEVIL, but a beautiful, perfect superangel. But God did give to His angels free moral agency – minds that were free to think and reason--the right of free choice . . . So God did NOT create a devil. He created a cherub, Lucifer--and Lucifer transformed himself into a devil by rebellion against the Government of God!” (H. W. Armstrong, *Did God Create A Devil?* Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, California. Emphasis in the original).

“This is part of Satan’s deception, son. He influenced his ministers to believe that I am a God with a broken heart, that he created himself against My will, and that he wrecked My creation. Did you not see how they bemoan the fact that evil appears to win the battle for the souls of human beings, not understanding that everything has a purpose and that this world is only of a temporary nature? Satan has the ability to place his thoughts into the minds of his children, just as I have the ability to place My thoughts into the minds of My children. As the Scriptures explain:

Luk 12:11 "Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say.

Luk 12:12 For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

Joh 8:44 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.

Joh 8:45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.

I placed My mind in Jesus when He was a human being, and because He obeyed Me in all things, even to death, He earned the right to become My Son, and My equal. Compare this with what Satan did: he

wanted to become My equal not through obedience but through rebellion. I have no problem with My children being thought of as My equals. As long as they understand their position and respect Me for who I am - their loving and benevolent Father - and know that everything I created was for their benefit, it is all right with Me. What do these Scriptures mean?

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

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

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

Php 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

Php 2:9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

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

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

Php 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

Php 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

Php 2:14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,

Php 2:15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

Php 2:16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

“This is why I subjected My children to such intense trials and tribulations. Placing My mind in them and conditioning them to always do what is right, and think the way I would think in any given circumstance, has not been easy. But when all is done and over, My children will never rebel against Me, for that would mean I am rebelling against Myself. Nor will they remember the old problems anymore:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“The problem with Satan’s children”, continued the Father, “is that they refuse to submit themselves to the kind of trials that would allow Me to place My mind in them. They want to be free to do what they want in this life, and then they want to “go to heaven when they die”. To use one of their expressions: ‘they want to have the cake and eat it too’. Sorry, it does not work that way: it is one world or the other.

Since I cast Satan down to earth, he believes and behaves as if he has the freedom to do what he wants, and has inspired his servants to believe and do the same. That is why they are obsessed with ‘free moral agency’. But, of course, this is only an illusion. No one is free to do what he wants. People either do what I inspire them, or what Satan inspires them. My children believe Me; his children believe him. My

children have placed their life at My disposal; his children have placed their life at his disposal. The tragedy comes from the fact that they all think they serve Me. They do not know that they are deceived. But that is their fault, for they have not tested the spirits as the Scriptures say they should.

1Jn 4:1 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.

My children know, believe and allow Me to be in control of their lives, just as his children want to be free to choose for themselves. In other words, My children believe in predestination, his children believe in free moral agency. What they do not know is that no one can cross from one side to the other. They were all sealed to be that way from before they were born.

One of the characteristics of Satan's preachers is that they always quote Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 to prove that he created himself against My will, but avoid like the plague the more important, and more direct, Scriptures which prove that I was, and am, in command of everything:

Pro 16:4 **The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.**

Lam 3:38 **"Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good?"** (KJV)

Deu 32:39 **'Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.**

1Sa 2:6 **"The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.**

1Sa 2:7 **The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.**

Isa. 45:7 **"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things."** (KJV).

Exo 4:10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I *am* slow of speech and slow of tongue."

Exo 4:11 So the LORD said to him, **"Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?"**

Exo 4:12 Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

Deu 29:2 Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land—

Deu 29:3 the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders.

Deu 29:4 **Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.**

Isa 30:20 **And though the Lord gives you The bread of adversity and the water of affliction,** Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, But your eyes shall see your teachers.

"They wanted to absolve Me of every evil in the world, and in so doing they played right into Satan's hands. He is now feared by more people than I am, even though the Scriptures make it clear that people ought to fear Me not Satan.

Deu 5:29 Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! (See also Jer. 32:37-42; Matt. 10:20; Rev. 19:5).

With this the Father brought the meeting to an end until next time.

GOD IN THE WORLD

At the next meeting, Apostle Paul began by asking the Father the following question:

“Father, it must have been a terrible experience for You to see Jesus hanging on that cross?”

“It certainly was, son!”

“Did You ever wish that it was You rather than Him then?”

The Father and Jesus smiled broadly knowing very well what Apostle Paul was getting at.

“Of course, I did it, Paul!”

“Excuse me for saying this, but why did You not go into the world Yourself instead of sending Your Son, Father?”

“Oh, I did that too, son!”

“I know You did it, like when You met Abraham at the time of Sodom and Gomorrah. As the Scripture says:

Gen 18:20 And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave,

Gen 18:21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

“But what I mean is why did You not go down and live the life of a human being from birth to death, like Jesus did?”

“I did that too, son!”

“You did it? Then why don’t the Scriptures speak about You as they speak about Jesus?”

“Oh, they speak about Me too, but not to the same extent!”

“Which Scriptures, Father?”

“You know, Paul, if anyone should have known this, I would have expected it to be you.”

“Sorry, Father, this beats me too.”

“All right, boys, I can see that you are all in the dark about this. Tell Me now; what is the meaning of these words?”

Rev 4:8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

“Where do you think I was supposed to go, on holiday? No, in the world!”

“But then, if this refers to You, it means that You went into the world three times. When was that, Father?”

“Before I tell you that, let us establish something important about this prophecy. The words, “was and is and is to come” indicate the timing of the revelation of this prophecy. The word "is", is showing us that it will be revealed during My second time into the world. As for its historical setting, have a look at the following Scriptures, from the Old and the New Testaments, and tell Me what you think they mean?”

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

Jer 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

Jer 31:32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

Jer 31:33 But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Heb 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

Heb 8:7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

Heb 9:11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

Heb 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

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

Heb 9:24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

Heb 9:25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—

Heb 9:26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

Heb 9:28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

“If I understand it right, Father, the God of the Old Testament became the Lord of the New Testament. Because You had a Testament with earthly Israel, You needed to die in order to be free to create a New Testament with spiritual Israel. Therefore Jesus Christ was none other than You. That must have been the first time You went into the world. But when were the second and the third times, and what purpose did they serve?”

“Very well, Paul. To answer your question you must first tell Me what the purpose of creation is?”

“To reproduce Yourself!”

“Correct! One person became a Trinity. Three people in perfect harmony at the top followed by a large number of children, such as you, each with their own role, position and rank in My Kingdom. Now do you remember the following discussion between Jesus and His disciples?”

Mat 20:20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.

Mat 20:21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."

Mat 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able."

Mat 20:23 So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared by My Father."

“Jesus knew about the Trinity and spoke about it later when He told His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations:

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Mat 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Mat 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

“Jesus had a free hand to appoint the Twelve Apostles, but He knew that the two positions, on His right and on His left, were of a different status and rank. He knew that they were reserved for people who would undergo the kind of trials and tribulations that He Himself did – trials which were far greater than those reserved for the ordinary people. What did the two disciples say when Jesus asked them whether they were able to drink the cup that He was about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that He was

going to be baptized with? They said, 'We are able.' And were they able? What happened when He was arrested, judged and crucified? Did they go and stand alongside Him to be judged and crucified with Him? They all abandoned Him. Jesus knew that they would not be able to stand such trials until they received the Holy Spirit, but He was not going to enter into a long discussion with them then, for He knew that they would not have been able to understand it anyway.

So then, the first time I went into the world I took the identity of Jesus Christ or, as Jesus wisely put it, the identity of a "Son of Man". Jesus Christ became the Savior of the world; He became My alter ego, so to speak.

The second time, I became Elijah, the Restorer of all things. The third time is yet to come."

"Can I venture a guess here that the third time You will go into the world it will be for the Holy Spirit, and that You will take the identity of a woman, and that this will happen at the end of the Millennium?"

"You are absolutely right, Paul."

"But Father, Jesus said that, "Elijah is coming first and will restore all things?" (Matt 17:11). If You restored all things and You were Elijah, how were people supposed to know who You were and listen to You?"

"They did not need to know who I was. They should have listened to anyone who spoke the truth in My name. But when I restored the Gospel of the Kingdom, they competed with Me by putting even more effort into spreading their false gospels.

As for the identity of Elijah, what do the Scriptures say?"

Mat 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Mat 27:47 Some of those who stood there, when they heard *that*, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!"

Mat 27:48 Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled *it* with sour wine and put *it* on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink.

Mat 27:49 The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him."

Mat 27:50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

"Those who heard Jesus call 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani' knew that He was calling on Me. "Eli" means "Elijah". "This Man is calling for Elijah!" they said. These things were plainly written for all to see and believe."

"Father, Jesus presence in the world was manifested by miracles. How was Elijah's presence manifested, for clearly it was not miracles?"

"No, and there is a good reason for that. At the time of Jesus, there was still a strong belief in God in the world. They knew about the Messiah, and believed that He would appear to save them from foreign domination. The Jews always looked for the wrong kind of Messiah. When Jesus appeared and did not do what they expected of Him, they lost faith in Him and crucified Him. But, of course, that was expected of them. Messiah had to live the life of a human being, to show the world the way of salvation, then be crucified and earn the right to sit at My right hand. By the time of Elijah, however, there was precious little faith in God in the world. Satan had deceived the world that there was no God, that everything was created through 'evolution'. As Jesus said: "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"(Luke 18:8).

Elijah's mission, therefore, was to show people their errors, and warn them of impending catastrophe. Now have a look at Zechariah 11 and see another proof of My presence in the world.

Zec 11:4 Thus says the LORD my God, "Feed the flock for slaughter,

Zec 11:5 whose owners slaughter them and feel no guilt; those who sell them say, 'Blessed be the LORD, for I am rich'; and their shepherds do not pity them.

Zec 11:6 For I will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land," says the LORD. "But indeed I will give everyone into his neighbor's hand and into the hand of his king. They shall attack the land, and I will not deliver *them* from their hand."

Zec 11:7 So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bonds; and I fed the flock.

Zec 11:8 I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.

Zec 11:9 Then I said, "I will not feed you. Let what is dying die, and what is perishing perish. Let those that are left eat each other's flesh."

Zec 11:10 And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples.

Zec 11:11 So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it *was* the word of the LORD.

Zec 11:13 And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty *pieces* of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter.

Zec 11:14 Then I cut in two my other staff, Bonds, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

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

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

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

"This passage speaks of 'shepherds who do not pity' their flock, of 'two staffs: Beauty and Bonds', and of a 'foolish' and 'worthless' shepherd who eats the flesh of his sheep. Now who do you think is the staff called 'Beauty'?"

"Undoubtedly, Jesus Christ."

"And 'Bonds'?"

"Now that You told us these things, and seeing that Beauty and Bonds are of equal status, 'Bonds' must be You."

"See, it isn't all that hard to find Me in the Scriptures if you put your mind to it, is it?"

"No, Father, it isn't!"

"Now it is not for nothing that 'Bonds' and the foolish and worthless shepherd are spoken of in the same chapter. 'Bonds' was the victim of that shepherd too. Satan thought that by making Me destitute in a foreign land I would not survive to complete My mission, thus condemning the world to utter destruction. He did not know that I was not made of a mettle that gave up easily in the face of adversity as his servants did. In spite of the numerous obstacles he set before Me, I not only completed My mission of restoring and preaching the Gospel as a witness to all nations, but exposed his ministers for what they were and the false gospels with which they filled the world."

"HAVE ANY OF THE RULERS BELIEVED IN HIM?"

"Father, one of the major problems in the world at the time You were there, was the breakdown of family life. Did You experience that too?"

"Yes, I did it, son! I had to experience everything the average person experienced."

"But Jesus said that people were not to divorce their wives except for sexual immorality?"

"He said that, but He said nothing about wives leaving their husbands. I did not divorce My wife, she left Me."

"Why did she leave You?"

"She could not cope with my determination to stay with the work in spite of the problems that it caused us. Like Lot's wife, she looked back and failed. We endured many trials and deprivations, and when she saw that it brought us no reward and no one joined and helped us, she left.

At first I found it hard to cope with it, but then I understood that this was in the Scriptures too. Don't they speak of God's divorce from an unfaithful wife and remarriage to a faithful one? After she left Me, a faithful person joined Me and helped Me finish the work.

That was the time when women demanded their freedom and the right to rule over men. A real revolution took place in the world then, one that lasted for the entire Millennium. Having seen the condition into which men have brought the world, they decided to take the reigns into their own hands.

And, as you know, it took them one thousand years to do what men have done in six thousand years. But it had to happen so that they all understood the measure of their own abilities. But these things are in the Scriptures too, and I would think you know about them.

Isa 4:1 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, "We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; Only let us be called by your name, To take away our reproach."

Isa 4:2 In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; And the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and appealing For those of Israel who have escaped.

Isa 4:3 And it shall come to pass that *he who is* left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem.

"This scarcity of men happened after the Great Tribulation, when many people died, and after the "Branch" returned and made Jerusalem the capital of the world."

"But, Father, Jesus did not experience marriage, so why did You?"

"Jesus did not experience marriage because He had to remain holy and untainted by the world. I had to experience not only the pain of marriage and divorce, but the sting of sin too. Jesus overcame the world from a position of holiness; I overcame it from a position of worldliness. No one could come to us and say that we did not know what life was like out there in the real world.

After Jesus fulfilled His mission, it was no longer one's sins that counted, but one's willingness to repent and change. From the moment I did that, I grew in knowledge and understanding until I understood who I was."

"Whose mission was more difficult?"

"Both missions were very difficult. Jesus can speak for Himself. We did not go into the world to duplicate each other's work. We had entirely different missions, but none was easy."

"When did You understand who You were? Was it from Your childhood?"

"No! I grew up not knowing who I was until quite late in life. I could not be entrusted with such knowledge until I was ready for it. It was the same with Jesus and with all My children. Think of yourselves: when did you realize that you were destined to become My children and major figures in My Kingdom? Not until you endured the trials that prepared you for such positions."

"What did You do when You realized who You were? Did You tell people about it?"

"No! I only told them that I was the servant of Christ doing the work of God, which was true anyway."

"Why did You not tell them the whole truth? You could have made it easier for Yourself by letting them help You."

"I could have made it easier for Myself? Don't you know what they did to Jesus when they found out who He was? First they did not believe Him, then, when they perceived that He was indeed who He said He was, they crucified Him. Fortunately, that happened right as He completed His mission. It was the same with Me. No one believed Me until My mission was nearly complete."

"Not even the leaders of Your Churches?"

"The leaders of My Churches were the real problem then. Don't you remember what you said would happen after you departed from the scene? Here is a reminder:

Act 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Act 20:29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

Act 20:30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

"So those 'savage wolves' took over the Churches just as I predicted, did they?"

"They certainly did it, son, and caused major ravages among the faithful. When I spoke to them they not only refused to help Me, but rejected Me and caused Me major problems. There is a similarity between what happened to Jesus and what happened to Me. He went to His own - the Jews - and His own rejected Him; I went to My own - the Christians - and My own rejected Me."

"Why did they reject You?"

"Because they expected miracles from Me, not knowing that these were not part of My mission. My presence in the world was accompanied by major disasters, but since they no longer believed in God, they did not believe that I could cause these things either."

“Who did they think was causing these things then?”

“Nobody! They just called them ‘natural disasters’. Everything was ‘natural’ in those days: earthquakes, volcanoes, famines, pestilences. Even the creation of the world and the appearance of life on earth happened ‘naturally’. Or as they would put it, things just ‘evolved’.”

“And the leaders of Your Churches believed these things?”

“Yes, and preached them. They preached evolution in its various versions: theistic evolution, gradual evolution, evolution through jumps, evolution with gaps, punctuated equilibrium, etc. They mixed truth with falsehood, just as Satan did in the Garden of Eden when he deceived the first humans and set the world on the course of perdition. I had difficulty reaching the ordinary people with the true Gospel because their leaders held them captives with their deceptions. So I witnessed it to the national and religious leaders, putting the responsibility on them. They will have to answer why the people were in such spiritual darkness and did not know what was happening in their midst until the Great Tribulation came and took them all by surprise. I spoke to them about these things not once or twice, but several times.

The leaders of ‘My Churches’, instead of checking the Scriptures to see if I what I was saying was right, blinded themselves to the truth by looking for errors and faults in My work. And they found plenty. It was part of My work to make mistakes, just it was part of My mission to show them that it was never too late to correct oneself. That was the time of the so-called ‘information explosion’. One had a hard time shifting truth from falsehood. The important thing was to stay close to God by continuously praying and studying the Scriptures. Repentance and willingness to change and grow in the Spirit meant life, while stubbornness and refusal to change meant death. They choose death rather than life.

They stumbled over the fact that My mastery of their language was not perfect, not knowing the Scripture which said that, ‘with stammering lips and another tongue he will speak to this people.’ (Is. 28:11). I exasperated Myself trying to learn their language so that they could understand Me, yet instead of appreciating My efforts they took that as a sign of weakness and proof that I was false.”

“The Holy Spirit could have taught You the language instantly, as He did with the Apostles at the beginning?”

“He certainly could, but then what would have been different between Me and other people? Could I claim that I underwent the kind of trials that they went through, plus a lot more, and that, like Jesus, I also overcame the world in the end?

I started My life from a position of poverty and weakness, but I had an intense desire to know and discover the truth, and I persevered until I found it. Then, like Jesus, I held on to it until I paid for it with My life.

“What about the people who baptized You, did they not see the transformation in You?”

“Oh they saw it, but they allowed Satan to put envy, jealousy and malice in their heart and instead of joining Me they persecuted Me.

They looked for reasons why I could not be whom I said I was just as the leaders of Jesus’ time looked for reasons why He could not be whom He said He was. Astonishingly, the main reason they did not believe in Me was that none of the other leaders believed either. Thus, they reinforced their own prejudices and encouraged each other not to believe in what was so blindingly obvious, forgetting that this was exactly what happened to Jesus too. Here are the Scriptures:

Joh 7:46 The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"

Joh 7:47 Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived?"

Joh 7:48 Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?

Joh 7:49 But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What are You going to do to these people, Father?"

"Nothing that they have not done to Me."

"And then will You face them again and grant them a place in Your Kingdom knowing full well what they did to You?"

"Certainly not, son! Do you think that these empty shells will ever be able to withstand the kind of trials that they put Me through? Not even half that, son, so have no fear that I or you or anyone else will ever see their faces again."

STATE OF THE WORLD

POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Shimon Perez on the meaning of the New World Order "The road to peace call for a great deal of sacrifices; it includes very much setbacks, failures, disappointments, yet when I have a look backwards... my God we are changing the Middle East and will have to continue to change it..

We live in an entirely changed world. The sources of strength and the sources of wealth are no longer material. They are not national, they are not geographical, they are not, as I said, material; they are totally a matter of the intellectual capacity of a nation: the level of science, the level of technology, the investment in education, the free flow of information, the motivation. Now all those elements, do not have borders. Science does not need a visa to travel from one country to another country. And technology doesn't go through customs. It flows around. So are, unfortunately, the dangers. We went over from a world of enemies to a world of dangers. The difference is enemies have a given land, have a frontier, have an identity card, have a uniform, have a fortification. But when you have a good look at the missiles, do they respect borders? When you have a good look at the non-conventional arms, are they being impressed by the frontiers or the size of the land? And if you have a good look at fundamentalism, all this is floating all over the places. So really, in the future the identity of a nation will be cultural rather than strategic. And if you want to make sure that you live in a secure surrounding, you have to cooperate. Guns cannot win wisdom; guns cannot replace wisdom. And if you want to be strong and wealthy, you have to make a revolution in your habitual way of thinking.

In politics, it is not the biological age, but the ideological age that counts. I know many people who are young in age but old in thinking. I know people who are old in age and yet fresh in their way of thinking. About the free economy, nobody has a choice, the whole world - the whole educated world - is going for a market economy. Because there are no frontiers, you have a global economy. Because there are no frontiers, you have multinational companies. We live in a world in which companies are more important than countries. Because of the new age, science is playing a major role. So what is all those talks about free economy? There is no alternative to a market economy, If you want to compete, and if you want to raise your standard of living. Now look at what's happening around Australia. In Asia itself, countries that were considered backward, poor, divided, belligerent - look what happened the minute they started to invest in education, to relax in their foreign relations, to adopt a free market, to base their economy on science - their world has changed. And I am afraid that some people are still using textbooks that were written 50 years ago, and which are totally irrelevant to our time. You know, I myself, lost much respect for history because I think there is very little we can learn from history. What we have to do is to try to learn what may happen, not what did happen, because what is happening is so different from whatever we have learned and whatever we know. Let me give you an example that would enable me to speak freer on that subject. You know, I do not know any political literature which is more brilliant and more elaborate than the one concerning the Soviet Union, the Kremlin, or what they call there, the Kremlinologists. I have I my own library a department devoted to the story of communism and the Soviet Union. Today, I am trying to get rid of the books. I found out that all those brilliant people were so brilliant that they didn't understand what's happening in the Soviet Union. Clearly, they didn't predict what may happen in the Soviet Union. So, I mean, if you are interested in brilliance for brilliance sake, it's one thing. But if you are interested in history, say, my God, why were we so wise so we were so foolish? Why didn't we understand elementary facts of what's taking place? Why did nobody foresaw that this huge body, the giant of communism, will fall like a giant of clay? Not by the intervention of a foreign army or by a threat of a foreign power - a communist brought an end to communism because communism reached its end. It reached its end because the world has changed." (Excerpts from an interview given by Shimon Perez to an Australian journalist." (*Lateline*, ABC TV, Oct 10, 1996).

"Israeli alert at threat of Iranian attack" "JERUSALEM: Claims by the United States Secretary of State, Mr Warren Christopher, that Iran is intensifying plans for a terrorist attack on Israel ahead of next week's elections have renewed speculation that Israel will respond with a direct attack on Iranian installations. . . The conventional wisdom had been that further loss of Israeli life would blow away the election chances of the Labour Prime Minister, Mr Peres, who is regarded by the US as the key to the Middle East process - and whose major slogan is that he will provide a secure Israel. But the editor-in-chief of the influential news magazine Jerusalem Report, Hirsh Goodman, said he believed Mr Peres had set the stage for an Israeli surgical strike against Iran. "He has fingered Iran for the terrorism in Israel," Goodman said. "The whole world would applaud a specific response; so would the Israeli electorate." (*The Australian*, May 23, 1996).

“US acts to block Chinese missiles” “THE Clinton administration is demanding that Russia and Ukraine rebuff covert Chinese attempts to buy advanced intercontinental missile technology that would give China the capacity to threaten American cities. “There have been communications at high levels to both the Russian and the Ukrainian governments of our very specific concern on this,” the United States Defence Secretary, Dr William Perry, said yesterday. The administration was “being very direct ... the demarche to the Russians and Ukraine was very specific”. The US had also protested to China, he said. A Pentagon intelligence report leaked to The Washington Times earlier this week said China was trying to buy technology and parts from the Russian SS-18 missile under the guise of improving its space-launch program. The report said such sales “would greatly improve Beijing’s ability to threaten targets in the US”. The SS-18 can carry at least 10 nuclear warheads and has a range of almost 11,500km. Ukraine, which built the missile until 1991, was also discussing “an SS-18 deal with China”. Dr Perry said the administration “vigorously opposed” the sales, not only because it enhanced China’s ability to threaten the US, but because it would violate both the US-Russian Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and the 31-nation Missile Technology Control Regime.” (*The Australian*, May 23, 1996).

“Tough foreign minister plans to lift Russia’s world profile” **“MOSCOW:** The appointment of Russia’s spy chief as the new Foreign Minister created some quivers in the West, but sent no shock waves. . . . When Mr Yeltsin toughened his foreign policy, the West was left guessing as to how tough it really was. Mr Primakov’s appointment has cleared the doubt. The appointment sends a strong message that Russia will not be content with its diminished role in world events and is determined to be treated as an equal. But Mr Primakov’s arrival will not persuade NATO that Russia has a right to veto future NATO members, therefore a more confrontational relationship between the powers is likely. In the early years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia basked in Western support, promises of aid, and an idealistic brotherhood with the United States. But soon the realities piled up - the Ames spy scandal, differences over Bosnia, and Russia’s plans to sell nuclear technology to Iran. The two powers agreed to discuss their conflicts openly and co-operate where possible. The relationship has struggled along, kept largely afloat by the personal rapport between Mr Yeltsin and the US President, Mr Bill Clinton. Although Western leaders like Mr Clinton have often spoken of the need for a unified Europe, the policy of taking nuclear weapons right to the Russian borders is more likely to create a gulf than to build bridges. Western leaders do not believe that expanding NATO and installing nuclear weapons in Poland or some other part of Eastern Europe, as has been foreshadowed, will unify Europe. NATO is pursuing expansion plans which will effectively encircle Russia, in spite of bitter Russian opposition and knowing that links with Russia will be corroded. The West’s policy is based on the view that Russia needs Western economic support and investment more than the West needs Russia. The policy assumes that if the Russian economy strengthens, its expansionist face will reassert itself, so it should contain the threat before it arises. The West has spent a limited amount on aid to support Russian democracy and economic reform, but US aid last year was paltry compared with the billions spent to prop up the Mexican peso. Mr Yeltsin said the appointment did not signify any fundamental change in foreign policy. Mr Primakov’s main role in the next six months will be to strengthen Mr Yeltsin’s campaign for the presidential elections, to articulate a strong Russian line and to raise Russia’s international prestige. There will be no more deference to the West.” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, January 13, 1996).

“NATO growth” “THE Polish President, Mr Kwasniewski, wrapped up three days of talks yesterday with the firm conviction that the United States will help his country become a member of NATO by 2001. Mr Kwasniewski, who met with the US President, Mr Clinton, Secretary of State Mr Warren Christopher and Defence Secretary Dr William Perry, said the US leadership agreed with Poland on the need to enlarge NATO.” (*The Australian*, July 12, 1996).

“Russia wary of NATO” “By correspondents in London and Moscow. Suggestions that NATO’s eastward expansion did not threaten Russia were “mere words”, the Defence Minister, General Igor Rodionov, said yesterday. General Rodionov also supported continued military action in Chechnya and said any reduction in Russia’s armed forces should be approached in a “measured fashion”. “For some reason NATO remains and keeps its powerful military potential as a military and political organisation, and for some reason colossal efforts are being made to bring NATO closer to Russia’s borders,” he said. “Everybody is saying and trying to convince us this eastward move does not represent any threat to Russia. But these are mere words. We must draw conclusions from history.” NATO foreign ministers will meet in Brussels in December to decide whether Moscow’s former Warsaw Pact allies Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary - the three candidates for early NATO membership - can become full members of the Western alliance.” (*APP, The Australian*, July 30, 1996).

“At Stalin’s museum, the truth remains purged” “TIME has stopped in Gori, Georgia, the birthplace of Josef Stalin. Perhaps the hands of the clock are still in his grasp, for the mighty forces of change that have swept through his Soviet empire have yet to penetrate the citadel of his memory. In the late 1980s, as glasnost and perestroika began to lay bare the bloodiest of Stalin’s excesses, there was talk of correcting the record at the Stalin State Museum here. There was talk of acknowledging some of Stalin’s victims. As recently as two years ago, plans were being laid for a museum souvenir shop that would sell Stalin memorabilia in keeping with the freemarket mood of the times. But like so many things across the vast and timeless former Soviet landscape, inertia prevailed. Indeed, the only difference is that the museum’s worshipful exhibits - removed for safekeeping to Austria during years of post-Soviet civil strife in Georgia - have now been put back on display at a time when more and more people are talking nostalgically about the good old days under communism. Stalin’s boyhood home, a single-room cabin where he was born Josef Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili, remains untouched under the pavilion built in 1937 to protect it. The adjacent baroque museum was opened in 1957 - four years after his death - and the exhibits were updated in 1979. Stalin’s personal armoured railway car, with its pre-Revolution mahogany trim, luxurious compartments and extra set of wheels, remains parked on the grounds. But it is inside the museum that a visitor finds time at a standstill, the cult of personality still fresh. Young Georgian schoolchildren are paraded through the halls, but what they see, the story of Stalin’s life, is virtually the same display of Soviet days as originally mounted. It is devoid of criticism, bereft of truth about Stalin’s millions of victims, his brutal collectivisation of farms, his purges, his prison camps. They just disappear.

Depicting Stalin as a man of culture, one exhibit explains how he took an interest in the translation of a famous Georgian poem, *Knight in a Tiger’s Skin*, into Russian. Stalin made notes in the margins of the translated copy, which is displayed under glass. The year was 1937, but there is no mention of the poets and writers Stalin sent to the camps and to their deaths that year. The onset of World War II is depicted with photos of brave Soviet soldiers rushing to the front. Nothing is said about the secret prewar protocols between Adolf Hitler and Stalin that divided up Poland and the Baltic States, or of Stalin’s panic as Nazi troops neared Moscow in 1941, or of his purges a few years earlier that wiped out a generation of army officers. Nor is there a word about the Great Terror the arrests, torture and executions of suspect Communist Party officials and others in the 1930s. Even the display covering Stalin’s personal life manages to skip over unpleasant details such as the suicide of his second wife, Nadezhda. Ms Nunu Jojishvili, a guide at the museum for 17 years, said that when the exhibits were removed for safekeeping in 1991, “we talked about making changes in the history of the 1930s, but nothing has been changed so far”. She took a pointer and showed a visitor the one critical item on display in the entire museum: the text of Lenin’s famous warning to his colleagues - dictated in 1922, just over a year before his death against Stalin having “unlimited power in his hands”. Ms Jojishvili is unapologetic. “We think he was a great politician, and people should know it,” she said. “We respect him. He didn’t do anything for Georgia in particular; he harmed many and did good to others. People are nostalgic about this period; they come here and think it was not that bad.” Ms ZhuZhuna Khinchikashvili, who as the museum’s “scientific secretary” is responsible for verifying information in the displays, said plans for changing the displays had been discussed ever since 1988, when the Soviet leader, Mr Mikhail Gorbachev, launched his reform drive in Moscow. Mr Gorbachev began to expose the dark secrets of the Stalin years, and the museum was closed for a short while. “We met all the experts, and we asked for money,” she said, but it was never forthcoming, so they put the old exhibits back up.” (*The Washington Post*, in *SMH*, Jan. 13, 1996).

“From Washington, with Love” “AFTER numerous wars-by-proxy in Africa and elsewhere, we have become .accustomed to the idea of the mercenary - the professional military man or airman who hires out his services to a cause in which he might or might not believe. Now,

apparently, we are entering the age of the political mercenary, bringing with him not weapons but the full armoury of focus groups, polling, marketing and advertising. A report in the current issue of *Time* magazine tells how a group of professional American political advisers (including a close adviser to President Bill Clinton) helped Boris Yeltsin win the Russian presidency. It is interesting but also slightly chilling. There is probably nothing wrong with political experts selling their wares on the international market - the Liberals and Labor have used American and British experts in Australia - but Russia in its present fragile state is surely a different matter.

As one of Yeltsin's Americans is reported to have said: "Secrecy was paramount. Everyone realised that, if the Communists knew about this before the election, they would attack Yeltsin as an American tool." Well, yes. But Yeltsin and his Russian advisers probably didn't appreciate that Americans - and particularly those in politics - have big mouths. That the whole story has now been told to *Time* surely doesn't stop the Russian Communists, or any other opposition group, from claiming now and forever more that Boris Yeltsin is a tool of the Americans. The report is careful to claim that President Clinton had no direct involvement in the recruitment of the American team but also says blithely that, when they needed help, they could get it from the White House. Considering that Yeltsin is at best erratic and at worst sometimes out of action for days or weeks on end, this close involvement of high-level Americans is at the very least a reckless exercise in gamesmanship. Yeltsin may well have been the best candidate from the West's point of view (probably from Russia's too) but he is surrounded by some rather unsavoury characters, including the mysterious General Lebed. Australians do not have to have very long memories to recall the constant claims during the Whitlam era that American influences were working for his downfall. And they will remember the bitter uproar which such reports generated. The thought of such meddling, in what is still a world superpower with more nuclear weapons than anyone except America, is disturbing. The important thing from the standpoint of most nations is a reasonably stable Russia. If it is achieved under the relatively open and free regime of Yeltsin, well and good. But if it turns out that a more authoritarian regime takes over, it is something we have to live with. History shows that it is dangerous for any power to identify its own national interests with an individual leader in a foreign country. America has taken us down a dangerous path." (*The Sun-Herald*, July 14, 1996).

"The hard men in Yeltsin's shadow" "Boris Yeltsin has secured a second term in office but as his health deteriorates his rivals are maneuvering to take his place... General Alexander Lebed, the newcomer with political instinct, seems to be President Yeltsin's favourite, at least for now. He has the loyalty of the army and control of the military and security apparatus... General Lebed does not have the money and the right people yet. But he is busily building a huge edifice of power within the Kremlin. His powerbase is the Security Council, whose role and powers he wants to define so widely it would be like an alternative to Mr Chernomyrdin's government within the Kremlin, pursuing its own policies in every portfolio area. As president, his style would be more confrontational, imposing his will rather than negotiating a compromise. He tried to bring back the post of vice-president for himself - a plan immediately resisted by Mr Chernomyrdin because it would enable Lebed to inherit the mantle if the President died in office. For the West, the real worry about General Lebed is the fact that the military-industrial sector has a vested interest in increased militarism and boosted weapons production. Having won a second term, Mr Yeltsin does have one power which eluded generations of Tsars and Soviet ruler who died in office, were deposed, murdered by their relatives, assassinated or brutally executed. He has the chance to decide the manner and timing of his departure with dignity, an idea which is entirely new in Russian politics..."

"Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown" Nicholas II, the last Tsar. The Tsar was forced to abdicate in the February 1917 revolution. He and his family were executed by a Bolshevik firing squad in the basement of their prison house in Yekaterinburg, on July 16, 1918.

- Vladimir Lenin, the revolutionary. He was incapacitated by a stroke in 1922, and although formally head of state he lived at a sanatorium, suffering two more strokes before he died in January 1924.

- Joseph Stalin, the iron fist. After 30 brutal years, including farm collectivisation, the famines, the introduction of the gulag, and the Great Terror of the 1930s, he died in 1953, six days after a massive stroke.

- Nikita Khrushchev, the judge of Stalin. In 1964, he was summoned by the Central Committee and removed from office against his will on the pretext of "subjectivism and voluntarism".

- Leonid Brezhnev, the stagnation leader. Brezhnev was seriously ill for many years, while Soviet authorities covered up his heart problems. He died in 1982 when complications set in after a chill.

- Yuri Andropov, the disciplinarian. The KGB chief, he was already sick, with an artificial kidney, when he took office, and spent six months of his 15-month rule in hospital.

- Konstantin Chernenko, the living corpse. He was so sick and frail when he came to power that he was known as the living corpse. He died in March 1985 after one year in power.

- Mikhail Gorbachev, the reformer. The first president of the USSR, he helped end the Cold War and allowed the Berlin Wall to come down, which gained him hardline enemies in the party. Gorbachev found himself out of a job in December 1991 when Boris Yeltsin signed a secret deal with the leaders of Belarus and Ukraine, dissolving the USSR.

- Boris Yeltsin, the democrat. The first democratically elected president in Russian history, he introduced democratic and economic reforms. Last year he was plagued by health problems, suffering two major heart scares. Despite the hardship many Russians are suffering, he won a convincing victory over the communist leader in Russia's presidential election this week." (*SMH*, July 6, 1996).

"Beijing plays the Moscow card" "China signed a landmark treaty yesterday which restores Sino-Russian relations to their pre-1960 level and secures its 4,300-kilometre northern border with three of Moscow's central Asian allies. The ceremony at the Shanghai Exhibition Centre brought together five regional leaders China's President Jiang Zemin, Russia's President Boris Yeltsin, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akayev and Tajikistan's President Imomali Rakhmonov - who pledged to turn their common border into a zone of peace. The pact obliges the signatories to cut back the number of troops along the border, to stop conducting military exercises in border areas, to limit the amount of live ammunition used in training and to notify each other of troop movements. The treaty crowned Mr Yeltsin's three-day visit to China, during which the two countries forged what they called a strategic partnership for the 21st century and signed trade deals worth up to \$6.4 billion. China wants to play Russia off against the United States, with which it has had many recent disputes. "Laughter replaces war of words on Sino-Russia border" said a dispatch from the Xinhua news agency. The sports field had replaced the battlefield as China and Russia compete against each other, the report said." (*SMH*, April 27, 1996).

"Books of terrible tyranny" "A Requiem for Karl Marx" RANK E. Manuel concludes his survey of the life and opinions of Karl Marx with a chapter entitled: "Vicissitudes of an Icon". In his lifetime, Marx's teachings achieved only limited fame and influence. Yet, after the death in 1883 of the caruncle-tormented prophet of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Marxism began to come into its inheritance. By the middle of our century, two immense empires and many smaller States were being governed (or tormented, perhaps) in the name of an ideology dedicated to the disappearance of States and empires. "Vicissitudes of an Icon" is a brief but marvellously resonant summation of the paradoxical and anomalous ways various "Marxist" tyrannies justified inhuman brutality by appeals to the spirit of *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*. In some circles, it is still fashionable to claim that the practices of those regimes were travesties of Marx's teachings and ideals. In his valediction to the most influential icon of the last 100 years, Manuel adopts a very different stance: It may seem heavy-handed to couple Marx with the blood-thirsty tyrants who tortured and executed millions while mouthing his shibboleths. But the regimes that spoke in his name derived their justification from the idea that the individual was of no moment in the period before the dawn of true human history, the coming age of unalienated labour; and if one Soviet State after another denied the meaningfulness of individual lives during the transition to the blessed time, Marx cannot be spared the world-historical verdict of complicity in their crimes. How far one of those States was intent on sacrificing the rights and needs of the individual in the struggle to achieve what Manuel calls "the perfection of communist man" is vividly illustrated by Vitaly Shentalinsky's account of the contents of some highly secret KGB files that came to light as the Soviet Empire began to disintegrate in the '80s. In a chapter dealing with the career of Maxim Gorky, the bright beacon of Soviet literature, Shentalinsky describes a famous gathering that took place in Gorky's town

house in Moscow on October 26, 1932. The Kremlin leaders - Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov and Kaganovich - attended, as did 50 or so writers. The meeting "would determine literary policies for years to come, until Gorbachev's *perestroika* in fact". And yet, Shentalinsky reminds us: "A few years would pass and every fourth participant of that evening was in prison and many were shot" . . . For these reasons *The KGB's Literary Archives* furnishes an invaluable and compelling insight into the predicament writers and artists faced in a brutally totalitarian world. Beyond that, Shentalinsky's account of his patient scratching away at the secretiveness and intransigence of the remnants of the KGB and his portrait of the chaotic political and intellectual life in post-communist Russia affords an eloquent postscript to those ideals and aspirations that Manuel chronicles in the course of his requiem for Marx, the woolly, bear-like visionary and Victorian paterfamilias, the master of invective and born in-fighter who began it all by sacrificing the individual on the altar of the dictatorship of the proletariat." (*SMH*, January 27, 1996).

"Devoured by Hatred" *"When the Chinese turned to cannibalism during the Cultural Revolution, they were simply achieving the annihilation of their enemies in the most totalitarian way, writes Ross Terrill. He argues that that barbarity bodes ill for modern China.*

IN 1967 in the township of Shilong in southwestern China, a Mrs Zou found herself on a list of Mao Zedong's class enemies ("a spy") because her husband had gone to Taiwan years before. She and her 32-year-old son were hung from a tree and beaten with sticks to obtain a confession of their links with enemies of China. They denied any wrongdoing and were led to a freshly dug pit to be buried alive. The woman, breaking her calm, cried to her son, "Are we going to die like this?" Said the son, "We should not confess to things we never did. Let's die." But as the dirt, was shovelled in, the son stood up and through his tears called out, "We should not die like this. It's too harsh." A militiaman stabbed him in the chest with a spear. The mother rose and she too received a spear in the chest. As the spears were pulled out, pieces of the lungs came out, too. The murderers - agents of the Chinese State - insisted that, as the earth was piled in, the son must lie on top of the mother. The son blurted out, "Oh God, how can you make me do this?" The burying alive continued and concluded. Afterwards, the murderers celebrated with a feast of cooked portions of the dismembered flesh. This hour of barbarity was one of hundreds of similar scenes of cruelty and cannibalism in Guangxi, a southwestern province whose most famous city is Guilin with its vertical limestone hills, during China's Cultural Revolution. For years, there were rumours and some stories appeared in the United States press, but little was known of the atrocities even within China and nothing admitted by Beijing. Now, thanks to a daring investigation by writer Zheng Yi, author of *Old Well* (made into a movie) and many other works published in China before his departure for the US in 1992, the story comes to light in his book *Scarlet Memorial*.

Hatred was licensed, annihilation quotas were devised and vendettas found their moment of opportunity. Knives went in, flesh flew through the air and the gates of hell opened wide. As the corpses of "class enemies" became available for consumption, the political elite chose the heart and the liver, while the masses pecked at the arms and the soles of the feet. Probably more than 100,000 people in the Autonomous Region (really a province) of Guangxi died in the political violence between 1967 and 1970. Just in the five counties investigated by Zheng, hundreds of class enemies were eaten. Thousands joined in the eating. Against all odds in a world where most of the communist bloc has melted away like butter in the sun, the same Communist Party rules China as it did in the 1960s. How pathological is this communist China? Is the Chinese nation that so much resembles a family (jia) such a wall of conformity that adult citizens, like children, will put up with anything their "parents" (the State) lay down? "The Chinese are different", it is said. Yes, but in what way? Is the Chinese State still capable of using barbarous means to achieve ends it perceives as glorious?

BEIJING writer Liu Binyan, asked by Zheng during a chance encounter on a train in China why he had not tackled the topic of cannibalism in Guangxi (having heard rumours about it), replied, "Too evil." Indeed, Zheng's initial impulse was to turn aside out of delicacy from the subject. One can understand why. Scenes like this abound: "Strolling down the street, the director of the local Bureau of Commerce [in Wuxuan] carried a human leg on his shoulder that he was taking home to boil and consume. On the leg there still hung a piece of a man's trouser." Children of 12 and 13 killed and ate their teachers. A girl who had killed six people was proudly called "Sister Six"; another, who had disposed of nine, "Sister Nine". The pots of cannibalism bubbled and boiled in front of local government offices. In Tongwan district in July 1968, a class enemy named Gao Dazuo was criticised at a rally, then forced to kneel down to be beaten on the head with a stick. One tormentor took off Gao's pants in order to cut off his penis. "Let me die first," implored Gao, "then you can cut it off! But the penis was severed as the victim screamed. Another attacker cut flesh from Gao's thigh. A third cut out the liver. "The rest of the crowd pushed forward and stripped the body of its flesh." We, too, may shy away from this grotesque slice of contemporary history. It would be a grave intellectual and moral mistake to do so. Zheng's book is one of the saddest ever written about the People's Republic of China and also one of the most important. In Guangxi there occurred totalitarianism's ultimate expression. Totalist ideology is familiar; so is total organisational control. In China we also confront total elimination of the enemy to the point of devouring him. A slogan would reach Guangxi from Beijing. Fearful or zealous local Cultural Revolution authorities would scurry to give it expression. People who had resisted "the revolution" in some way or other were targeted. It became a test of political purity to do to them the worst that one human being can do to another. One terrible thing about *Scarlet Memorial* is that most people faced death like lambs. As the sticks and knives were wielded, the innocent "just knelt down silently, no begging, no cursing, no arguing and not the slightest show of a willingness to resist". In these rural areas of Guangxi, near where tourists glide along the Li River to exult in some of the world's finest scenery, most of the killers knew most of the victims. Yet people did not dare shed tears for murdered friends and family, much less collect the less edible, abandoned body parts for burial. Not one act of direct physical heroism is recorded by Zheng. He learned of no one who jumped up as a killing began and said, "This is wrong, this is too much. I am going to try to stop it and if you kill me in the act of trying, so be it!" A few people refused to submit, crying out that evil was being perpetrated, and suicide recurred. But apparently no one died in a physical attack on a murderer. The political campaign of the late 1960s had begun with the whim of Mao in Beijing. Restless, distrustful of colleagues, disappointed at many of the flowers in the socialist garden he had created, Mao triggered an internal political fight that in scope, violence and dislocation is without parallel in the life of major nations in our time. Ostensibly the Cultural Revolution was to revivify Mao's revolution by mass participation. But the convulsion began from above and to the degree that it comprised "rebellion", this was mostly the fake variety of rebellion-on-instructions. Supreme power did not change hands in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution; it had been Mao's beforehand and was Mao's when the storm subsided, so there was no "revolution". All the cruelty and suffering in the pretty hills of Guangxi, as in a score of other provinces, was politically triggered yet without any sustained political outcome. Between the supreme leader's views and the grassroots, there were few intermediate levels on which ideas were tested, debated or assailed. As a dictator in the tradition of the Chinese emperors, Mao tended to view the Chinese masses, whom he once called "blank" as well as poor, as actors with a fixed role in the political drama, not as with thoughts of their own.

The Chinese (Han) people regard Guangxi as a place of scenic beauty yet also a slightly dubious "border region". About 15 million of its 45 million inhabitants are Zhuang, a round-faced, easygoing people who are the most numerous non-Han race in China. In some north China circles, one view of the cannibalism of the 1960s is that Zhuang culture was revealing its dark side. It is true that in Zhuang history there is a thread of cannibalism. To a degree, to invoke the Zhuang tradition of cannibalism would be to put the central focus on hatred and cruelty in Guangxi rather than on the narrower pathology of cannibalism. If one goes back far enough there is cannibalism also in Han tradition; the great statesman Liu Bei, who founded the Shu State in today's Sichuan Province after the fall of the Han Dynasty in the 3rd century, ate human flesh. The important question is: what kind of politics reinforces human altruism and what kind undermines it? In the brief and destructive history of totalitarianism we have a display of the latter. In no sense is human altruism a Western monopoly alien to China; the Chinese ideas of *ren xin* (human feelings), *ren dao* (humanitarianism) and *ren qing* (human sympathy) are old and powerful. In recent times, it is totalitarian politics that have removed from Chinese public life the value of compassion and civility, and replaced them with the theory and practice of the end justifying the means. (In the West we have been touched in recent times by the icy wind of group hatred, but fortunately it has been counterbalanced by law, a free press and a strong sense of individual dignity and responsibility; there were no such counterbalances in Guangxi). When one of the official murderers tracked down by Zheng declared, "Wrongly killing 100 is better than letting one guilty one escape," this was the quintessential obliteration of law by ideology. Lack of restraint upon the tribe and its sense of its own rectitude - here is the marshland where Marxism, fascism and extreme nationalism meet. Communist policies set the stage for the cruelty; it inspired, licensed and later covered up the frenzy. Livers were

boiled and eaten as red flags fluttered and Maoist slogans rent the air. It does not seem an accident that one of the few heroes in *Scarlet Memorial*, a senior cadre named Wang Zujian, was a former "rightist" who had dared express doubts about socialism. In 1969 Wang wrote a petition to Beijing about the cannibalism in Wuxuan county. For 11/2 decades, no one dared to ask questions about the cannibalism or search archives for traces of it. Only when the boss of Guangxi, Wei Guoqing, finally fell foul of Deng Xiaoping in 1983 did a political realignment in the province clear a path for Zheng's limited access to the cannibalism story. The Communist Party's responsibility does not deny the complicity of many ordinary people who jumped with alacrity to perform the hellish tasks at hand. Or the Delphic compromise of those who neither enthused nor resisted but, feeling guilty about the act of cannibalism, took the human flesh mixed in with pork to modify the effect. Yet basically the violence was a method of so-called class struggle, initiated by Mao's Communist Party, with the people as stage props. The very term for being beaten to death was "subjected to dictatorship". In Guangxi, the genuine class struggle of land reform after the communists took over in 1949 saw far fewer victims than the contrived "class struggle" of Mao's duel with his supposed enemies in the 1960s. Cannibalism was also justified in China's war against Japan by considerations analogous to those invoked amid the "class struggle" of the 1960s. Unlimited hatred of the enemy was the connection between the two. Time and again in his interviews with former Guangxi cannibals, Zheng heard the refrain, "What I killed was the enemy." In other words, what could be wrong with that? "Didn't Chairman Mao teach us, 'If we don't kill them, they'll kill us'?" Through the years there have been many interpretations of the Cultural Revolution and I am not sure that any of them will stand the test of time and further access to evidence. The upheaval cannot be explained by the "impact of the West" approach, by China's reaction to the Vietnam War or by Chinese utopianism. All of these approaches were common when I was a graduate student at Harvard during the Cultural Revolution. All underestimated the role of the personal dramas of Mao and his wife Jiang Qing, as well as taking insufficient account of the role of Chinese fatalism and collectivism. We can only say in broad terms that the keys to the upheaval are to be found in the modes of communist dictatorship, the pent-up energy of people relentlessly propagandised yet denied political participation, Mao's quest for untrammelled power and a phantom of perfect socialism, and certain age-old ways of Chinese culture. Only if one condescends to China, or worse, puts the Chinese race in a separate exotic category, would it be possible to take these revelations lightly. Of course, the "China exceptionalism" school avoids the agony by declaring that China is so different from any other culture that common values do not exist. But Westerners who feel a universal bond with the Chinese cannot remain human beings and not face what happened. CHINA is still ruled by a Communist Party exercising a monopoly of political power as it was in the 1960s. Unfortunately, there are observers of China who write as if politics does not exist anymore in China and that post-Mao China has become exclusively an economic phenomenon. This school of "China exceptionalism" projects upon the Chinese an immunity from any desire for political life. If there is one conception of Derig's China that is wrong and will set us up for a shock if embraced, it is the death of politics. Many people think the economic and social changes in China under Deng have brought mental freedom, but for the most part it has not (yet) done so. The Government promotes full bellies and gadgets in the home, but not information for the people's minds. The story of the Guangxi cannibalism is untouchable today within China. Zheng, dodging the authorities in the year following the Tiananmen Square killings to smuggle his manuscript out to the West, came within a hair's breadth of capture while creeping toward the border and escaping to Hong Kong in a small wooden boat. The huge task of assessing the role of communist ideology in the Cultural Revolution must await a post-CCP rule historiography. After Maoism has given way to Leninist nationalism, the absence of a sense of law in China remains alarming. Important legal cases are at the mercy of ideology. The card "enemy of China" is played against any inconvenient idea. The parameter of all morality is the Chinese State, with its mission to guard the orthodoxy of Leninism - propped up by throwing consumer goods to the masses below. China is different - yet not so much for cultural reasons as for its haughty, didactic State. Leninist politics - not intrinsic Chineseness - makes the Beijing Government a stultification for the Chinese people and for many foreign governments, too. It is only half true to say the Chinese will always conform to the authority of the moment; when they sniff change in the air their passivity can turn to passionate involvement, as during the democracy movement of 1989. For thousands of years there has been the tradition of the inner-directed individual standing up and speaking truth to power - Zheng is one such. During the killing and eating in Wuxuan county in 1968, Wu Hongtai, the head of Wuxuan Middle School, reached the end of his tether. Witness to nameless horrors, branded a "capitalist roader", he felt life had lost meaning. One day Wu walked out of his school to a nearby river. He took off his shoes and placed them neatly on the bank. Just as he was about to jump into the turbulent current, a hunched old shepherd happened to shuffle by with his flock of sheep. The dim-sighted but sage old man could see what was about to happen. Passing close to Wu he muttered, "Soon it will all be over." The old shepherd's remark inspired Wu to cancel his suicide plan. He put his shoes back on. One day, too, the Leninist grip on Chinese politics will "all be over". Yet years of Leninism have deeply eroded social morality and the damage will be felt for years to come. The Deng era, despite major achievements, has not replaced Maoism with a new public philosophy and a new social morality. One lesson we learn from the pain of many post-communist regimes in Europe is that years of communist stultification cast a shadow beyond the moment of the Leninist system's fall. The tighter Leninism's grip, the more ingrained the justification of horrible means by a glorious socialist end; the feebler the autonomous shoots of society amid the concrete jungle of the State, the more conformist the response of people to communist rule; the more all this was true under communism, the more intractable have been the problems of post-communist rule. Some of the worst fruits of the Mao and Deng eras are yet to be revealed; they will manifest themselves in the post-communist decades when China will suffer from a citizenry innocent of the disciplines of law, officials with no shred of belief in a public philosophy and a society pervaded by a jungle mentality that assumes that the consequence of not trampling on others will be the immediate trampling of oneself. The cruelty and cannibalism in the hills of Guangxi in the 1960s suggest how difficult the sociocultural challenges of the postcommunist era will be." *"Ross Terrill, author and China specialist, has written six books on China, including Chinain Our Time, Madame Mao and Mao. 'This article is based on a foreword for Scarlet Memorial, to be published by Westview Press in May.' (Weekend Review, March 23-24, 1996).*

"Wolf's eye view" Vasily Grossman witnessed the worst of human behaviour during the 20th century and wrote the truth of what he saw. According to a new book on his life, this included the revelation that the Holocaust began on Soviet territory well before the Polish death camps. . Grossman, a Jew to boot, could realistically, then, have arrived at few other descriptions of this other than the "wolfish century ... when people lived like wolves, and wolves lived like people". Of the many instances of man's inhumanity punctuated throughout Grossman's essentially cautionary tales, one that is particularly chilling is a reference to a woman who had eaten her children during the Ukrainian famine.

"Her face was human. But her eyes were those of a wolf," Grossman wrote with the authority of someone who had in all probability witnessed such uncomfortable horror. (During these times, cannibals were not rare, even though they knew they would be put to a public death). Yet, for one who had seen the reflection of the wolf in man's eye, Grossman nonetheless felt the need to chronicle his era, obviously in the hope that his lifetime of witnessing misery and, literally, hell on earth could serve as a salutary lesson to the generations to come. "In the cruel and terrible time in which our generation has been condemned to live on this earth, we must never make peace with evil. We must never become indifferent to others or undemanding of ourselves," Grossman wrote. . . GROSSMAN was the child of two people who happened to be Jews, but felt not especially so. He was privy to a very liberal, bourgeois upbringing, studying in Switzerland and becoming acquainted with European culture while living in Berdichev. His parents were not like the poor shtetl Jews depicted in *Fiddler on the Roof* who made Berdichev a hive of Jewish culture. They were thoroughly Russified, comfortably wealthy and rarely religious.

There is considerable evidence that Grossman, a humanist, was unappreciative of his Jewishness. No doubt it caused him difficulties in a prejudiced hotbed such as Ukraine. In fact, he saw bolshevism as the great liberator of all peoples - especially Jews who had historically been discriminated against by the fervently nationalistic Ukrainians - and felt vindicated when the 1918 law banning anti-Semitism was introduced. This, like many actions of the covertly hostile Leninists, was but a smokescreen, the real aim of which was to get Jews to surrender their right to practise Judaism, accepting instead the "secular faith of scientific atheism". In his life's work, the weighty, *War and Peace*-like novel *Life and Fate* - only published after Gorbachev's glasnost freed the reigns of Soviet censorship - Grossman is the first Russian to unearth the truth about Stalin's legendary military prowess. Grossman reveals that if it were not for Stalin's bungling, such as a ludicrous insistence on "Not One Step Back!" - he positioned troops behind the frontline to shoot any Red Army soldiers not moving forward - and his incompetent High

Command's indifference to its men - soldiers were routinely marched over minefields to spare tanks - what became the greatest loss of life in any theatre in history could have been greatly avoided. "Many [such] facts about the war remained *verboden* until the very end of the Soviet regime in 1991," the book states." (*The Weekend Review*, May 18-19, 1996).

"Once Again, Why the Germans?" "A new Hitler book misses some old truths about groups and evil.

HOW DO WE EXPLAIN THE HOLOCAUST? HOW DO WE EXPLAIN THE INEXPLICABLE? There is a new answer, but it is really an old one. Daniel Goldhagen, a young Harvard professor, has just published *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, a book that has unleashed a flash flood of protest. Goldhagen's thesis echoes the oldest theme of all. Why the Germans? Because they were Germans. Forget Kant, Goethe and Bach. Start with Martin Luther, a venomous anti-Semite, and then fast forward down the ages all the way to Hitler. It was all there, deeply embedded in the culture and just waiting to happen. Oh, no, retort the postwar Germans. It was Hitler and his henchmen, a bunch of extraterrestrials, as it were, who hijacked Germany in 1933 and then proceeded to commit those unspeakable crimes. We did not know, and if we did, we had to follow orders. Case dismissed, guilt dispatched. Was Hitler really a Satan from outer space? No. He was voted into power, and Nazism was gleefully embraced by most Germans from the lowly labourer to the monocled aristocrats. But was there a singular German destiny that propelled the country past all bounds of civilisation? Also no. There was little to distinguish Germany's pathology from that of other European societies. The totalitarian temptation was alien to few, and murderous anti-Semitism has cut a bloody swath through all of Europe: from medieval England to Stalinist Russia. Paradoxically, this view hardly disposes of the original question. Indeed, it sharpens it. If Germany was part of the mainstream, why did it only happen there? Goldhagen's verdict is simple and cruel: Germany was different. Only there did the "normal" hatred of Jews degenerate into "eliminationist anti-Semitism:" Don't just extrude them, extinguish them. How does Goldhagen prove his indictment of an entire culture? Exhibit A is the story of the *Ordnungspolizei*, or "order police," who moved in behind the Wehrmacht as it swept east. These were no SS storm troopers but ordinary folk, family men, a faithful microcosm of German society as a whole. And yet they took to mass murder with a vengeance, overfilling their "quotas" and killing with sadistic abandon "They did so even though they did not have to," because they considered it right and just - just like their compatriots back home. But what do these harrowing accounts prove? Driven by prosecutorial passion, Goldhagen ignores the obvious. You cannot reason backward from a sample of killers to the culture as a whole, even if their sociology matches the composition of the rest. You cannot conclude from "These policemen were ordinary Germans" that "All Germans were like these policemen." What about the Nazi system in which these "willing executioners" operated? The system of indoctrination and training, the Satanic setting, bereft of all civilising restraints and counteracting values? The oldest saw of sociology is that groups obey their own rules. Their behaviour proves nothing about either individuals or nations. Bonnie and Clyde were killers. Does this mean that their families, closely related by genetics and socialisation, were born killers too? Nor can you reason forward from culture to mechanised mass murder. If the Germans imbibed "eliminationist anti-Semitism" with their mothers' milk, as Goldhagen argues, why isn't Germany a country of demented "eliminationists" today? There is an obvious answer. The "system" has changed. Liberal democracy has sunk miraculously strong roots in the soil where jackboots once strutted. If Truman and Jefferson could prevail in Germany after 1945, there must be more to German history than Luther's poisonous seed. And also less: neither eternal destiny nor damnation.

Professor Freud would have a field day. "Me thinks the lady doth protest too much," he might muse. Goldhagen has overargued his case. But strangely, so have his German critics. A familiar rehash substituting sensationalism, pedantry and sheer anti-Germanism for originality, they snort. The tone has ranged from the shrill to the contemptuous. Unable to restrain himself, one critic has even indicted all of America along with Goldhagen. There was something bizarre, he insinuated, about a society [the U.S.] that "regards such arguments as intellectual progress." Though Goldhagen concludes far too much from his prosecutorial sweep through German history, his message hurts because it states with pitiless insistence what cannot be denied. Hitler was no Darth Vader, and too many Germans were active as a conspiratorial contract job. But did the Germans do it because they were Germans? The indictment does not stick, and the explanation does not wash. The Holocaust, writes Elie Wiesel, "will remain forever unexplained. And inexplicable." (*Time*, April 29, 1996).

"The Demidenko affair" "A savage and divisive row has broken over the head of a young first novelist, pitting some of Australia's intellectuals against her and each other" "FREELANCE book editor Lynne Segal was thrilled to be given the job of marking up Helen Demidenko's manuscript *The Hand that Signed the Paper* when it won *The Australian Vogel* award for an unpublished manuscript from an author under 35 in September 1993. She was there at the upmarket Sydney harbourside restaurant when the writer, then 22, seemed teary amid the intoxicating swirl of acclaim from respected writers such as Patrick White's biographer, David Marr, who spoke that night of Demidenko's astonishing talent and attributed to her the "true novelist's gift of entering into the imagination of those she is writing about". There was no mention publicly that concern about the book's perceived anti-Semitism burdened one of the three judges, Australian novelist Roger MacDonald, who warned in his confidential report to Patrick Gallagher, executive director of Allen & Unwin the company contracted to publish *The Australian Vogel* prize winners: "There will have to be a lot more work on the roots of the Ukrainian anti-Semitism otherwise this manuscript will be seen with justification as anti-Semitic" . . . Demidenko's critics say there is not enough historical distance between the characters' voices and the author's voice to give readers what Roger MacDonald calls a wider moral lens. And they have been troubled too by statements Demidenko has made in recent interviews suggesting she endorses her characters' belief that Jewish communists masterminded the famine that killed 5 million Ukrainians, thus begetting the hatred that fuelled the Holocaust.

Historians agree that some of the communists who took part in Stalin's ruthless campaign of agricultural expropriation in Ukraine were Jewish. While none disputes that Ukrainians may have blamed individual Jewish communists for the famine and that many Ukrainians who participated in the Holocaust may have been motivated in part by revenge, it is anathema to Demidenko's critics to equate the Jewish race with the Bolshevik regime. Ukrainian involvement in Hitler's war against the Jews must be seen in the broader context of longstanding Ukrainian antagonism, towards Jews who, barred from owning land, dominated commerce in the towns. Early on in the book, Fiona Kovalenko reflects on the war crimes charges against her Uncle Vitaly and recalls words of support from her friend Cathe. "I did not tell Cathe about the hate, or how the Ukrainian famine bled into the Holocaust and one fed the other. All the things I never told." (*The Weekend Australian*, July 15-16, 1995).

"US tells China: hands off Taiwan" "The United States revealed yesterday it had warned China not to attack Taiwan, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senator Evans played down fears that friction across Taiwan straight may spark a regional crisis. A spokesman for the US State Department said any attempt to determine Taiwan's future by force would be of "grave concern" to Washington, "and the Chinese government is quite familiar with the views of the United States and we have reminded the Chinese government at senior policy level of late of the US policy" (*SMH*, Jan. 26, 1996).

"Republicans' Budget plan goes where president fears to tread" "Mr Clinton may achieve a short term victory over his Republican rivals, but the broader issue of 1996 budget remains unresolved. . . Bizarrely for a party that took control of Capitol Hill last November on a promise of radical change, the Republicans have in many cases not been radical enough. They have left the biggest program of all, social security, entirely alone - even though they had a cast-iron excuse to prune it, namely the discovery by statisticians that past cost-of-living increases for pensioners had been too big. They have trimmed spending on Medicare, the health program for the old, but have mostly avoided the real reforms, notably means-testing, that are needed to hold back the unchecked growth in federal health spending. And they have left whole forests of subsidies and tax breaks, and thickets of welfare for business and other favourite constituencies, largely untouched by the axe. All these programs would be better candidates for cutting than two of the programs the Republicans have aimed at, welfare and Medicaid (respectively, the income-support and health programs for the poor). In both cases, the Republicans are seeking to replace individual entitlements with block grants, inviting the States to find more effective and efficient ways of delivering services to the needy.

But by immediately cutting welfare, spending and the Medicaid budget, they undermine the credibility of the whole block-grant approach. In the case of Medicaid, some savings could be made, but a cut of 30 per cent in 2002 risks hugely increasing the number of Americans without

health insurance. Indeed, It is the least affluent who will bear a disproportionate share of the pain that the Republicans would impose. Leaning on the poor might be justified in the cause of deficit reduction - if there were no alternatives. But there are, and not just on the spending side. Congress's proposed tax cuts, worth \$US245 billion (\$322 billion) over seven years, are unnecessary, badly targeted and over-favourable to the rich. Balancing the Budget is a far more urgent goal than cutting taxes." (*The Australian*, Nov. 15, 1995).

"Mahathir attacks West for imposing its values on Asia" "THE Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir, sharply criticised Western countries yesterday for imposing their values on less-developed Asian nations, saying the West ranked personal freedom above social harmony. In a speech to Pacific-rim corporate and government leaders, Dr Mahathir also took tacit aim at the United States for threatening to impose sanctions on China for a broad range of perceived offences. "The Cold War was not won by Western diplomats or generals. It was won by the workers of the West with their Chevys and Plymouths, and it was won by well-stocked supermarkets and shopping malls," he said. "Enough. It is better to engage than to contain," Dr Mahathir said, using a phrase invoked frequently by officials in the Clinton administration, who favour dynamic trade with communist China. Dr Mahathir disputed the notion that Western values held universal appeal and that "Asian values", of which he is a long-time champion, served primarily to justify repressive authoritarian rule. He cited a 1994 study that found East Asians, whose Confucian traditions placed great value on social harmony and filial piety, less inclined than Americans to cite free expression and individual success as top priorities. "So far, it has not entered the mind of any Asian leader to threaten sanctions if any Western country fails to put its house in order," Dr Mahathir said, alluding to US pressure over human rights and other issues that many Asian leaders view as heavy-handed and hypocritical. "No Asian parliament I'm aware of has passed a single resolution calling on its government to take steps should a European country not reform itself. "If it is preposterous for Asian leaders to threaten sanctions ... could it not be a little preposterous for Europeans to threaten sanctions when decent Asian societies impose their own standards and norms and not yours?" (*The Australian*, May 23, 1996).

"Malaysian leader as hard on the East as the West" "The truth is that Muslims and Muslim nations are weak, left behind and dependent on other nations and their people. The administration of Muslim States in this age is usually weak, backward and often chaotic and disorderly. There is no Muslim country which can be considered a major power and respected by the world." If you think this sounds like a hosanna from some Western triumphalist, think again. It comes from the Muslim prime minister of a predominantly Muslim, but officially secularist country. The same prime minister has an equally jaundiced opinion of the West. "The golden age of Western civilisation is coming to an end because they have succumbed to their weaknesses. Western civilisation is waning, and the West no longer has the will to strengthen their own civilisation. History has always shown that the fall of one civilisation would be replaced by another, and it is time for the Eastern nations to overtake the West." Both comments come from Malaysia's outspoken Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad. They reflect his push to make Malaysia a fully developed and industrialised country by 2020 (an anathema to Islamic fundamentalists), to by-pass the intermediate stage of NIC (newly industrialised country) in doing so, and his phobia of a Western conspiracy to sabotage Third World development. His comments on Muslim States, made in an address at the opening of the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding in July 1992, presumably refer to those with a fundamentalist theocratic government. Equally, they can be seen as directed at Malaysia's home-grown fundamentalists, who want an end to democratic secularism and the creation of an Islamic State." (*Sydney Morning Herald*, January 13, 1996).

"Perils of Islamic stereotyping" "The sweeping of Taliban in Afghanistan has again captured the attention of the world and highlighted the necessity for understanding the role and potentiality of Islam in world politics. In this electronic age, the media plays a very important role in forming people's opinion. As the international media is controlled by the West, Islam, and Muslims in general, are portrayed not infrequently as backward and harsh. The West needs to appreciate that while the foundation of its values is secular, Islamic values are based on religion enshrined in the Koran, which require Muslims to maintain a harmonious relationship with each other in their day-to-day activities, whether local, national or international. After losing its imperial grip over the vast territories now occupied by the Muslim countries, the West wishes to maintain control through cultural hegemony. A common complaint of the West is that Islam is standing in the way of change and progress in modern society. But the West suffers from inhibitions that its cultural heritage and laws are equal to their supremacy in material well-being and technology. The West sometimes makes the mistake of identifying a particular culture or practice prevailing in a Muslim country as Islamic. It needs to be understood by both Muslims and non-Muslims that Islam is much greater than Muslims themselves. It is the greatness of Islam which allows flexibility in the way of life for its followers, provided it is in conformity with the guidelines laid down in the Koran." (*SMH*, Oct. 14, 1996).

"Afghanistan: Hunger stalks streets of Kabul" "The young woman shakes uncontrollably as she steps towards us. Through the thick mesh panel that hides her face, she pleads frantically in a rush of Pashtu, then begins to sob. Her burkah - the heavy-veiled long costume which Afghanistan's new Islamic rulers have ordered every woman to wear - is stained and rugged. It reveals only her ankles and a pair of red leather shoes. Once elegant, the shoes are now broken and caked with dust, a pathetic echo of another time, when there was money and hope and a society that did not judge the celebration of beauty and fashion as a crime. Now, widowed and destitute, the woman is begging for help to feed three children. And she is risking the wrath of the Taliban soldiers who patrol the streets by approaching men and foreigners. "Please help us," she pleads. "I have two daughters and a son. Last night we did not eat anything, and I have no money to buy food today". . . A week after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban, there is a new sense of urgency and apprehension among a people whose meagre resources have already stretched to the limit. The latest edict from the Taliban has ordered a halt to public transport in Kabul five times a day to allow people to report to mosques for prayers. Relief agencies fear the fundamentalists could provoke a humanitarian crisis, with the jobs of tens of thousands of former government employees threatened and women ordered to stop working. . . Kabul has an estimated 35,000 families dependent on widows and there are fears that the Taliban's campaign to restrict female employment will drive many into relief agencies." (*SMH*, Oct. 4, 1996).

"Bloody purge after Iraq coup" "Details of a failed assassination attempt emerged yesterday as Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein celebrated what seems to be a comprehensive diplomatic victory over the United States . . . In less than a week Saddam has established his authority in Kurdistan and seen the US missile strike shatter the anti-Iraq alliance in both the Arab world and among the Western allies. This was underlined yesterday when members of the Gulf Cooperation Council meeting in Saudi Arabia failed to express any support for last week's American raid . . . The most dramatic evidence of this was the failure of Britain and the USA to carry the United Nations Security Council [condemnation of Saddam's incursion in the Kurd's "safe heaven] in the face of vetoes by Russia and France. "The dirty American is defeated. Iraq has imposed its rights in international bodies" the official Baath Party newspaper said in Baghdad said yesterday. Saddam himself celebrated by declaring yet another Jihad, or Holy War, on the USA." (*The Daily Telegraph*, September 9, 1996).

"Muslims 'attack, terrorise opposition" "Sarajevo: Opposition party members are being terrorised and beaten by agents of the Muslim-dominated Government in a campaign of intimidation which further erodes any pretence of fairness in the coming local and parliamentary elections here, according to opposition leaders, senior NATO officers and international monitors. Detentions, interrogations, public assaults on party supporters and attacks on political rallies have prompted opposition leaders in some towns to say it has become nearly impossible to organise or conduct a campaign for the September 14 elections. "Everyone I know who supports our party has been called into the secret police headquarters for long interrogations, some of them repeatedly ... often they are beaten," said an opposition party organiser from his home in Bihac. In a coffee shop in the town of Cazin, with his back to the wall and his eyes alert, another organiser said: "The worst times are when they call and threaten my family. My wife and I know they can do anything they want with impunity." Opposition leaders in several Muslim-controlled towns said their supporters were afraid to even discuss politics openly. NATO officials say the power behind the intimidation campaign, a Bosnian Government intelligence organisation called the Agency for Investigation and Documentation, has hundreds of agents working across Muslim-controlled areas of Bosnia, especially in the north-west, where President Alija Izetbegovic's Party of Democratic Action considers the opposition strongest." (*The New York Times*, *The Telegraph*, *London*, *SMH*, August 19, 1996)

“The Arab world’s time bomb” “No matter what the outcome of the Middle East peace process, fundamental changes in the social structure of the region are likely to cause future strife, writes Robert D. Kaplan. We tend to believe, because the Arab-Israeli dispute occurred in our lifetime, that we have been living through a period of momentous history. But, in fact, there has been comparatively little political change in the Middle East. Consider Egypt. For more than 40 years, it has been a socialist kleptocracy ruled by the same class of Nasserist officers: some more repressive than others, some friendly to Israel, some hostile to it, but all basing their rule on emergency military law. On the other hand, there has been great social movement. On the eve of the 1967 war, Egypt had 30 million inhabitants. Now there are more than 60 million. In the 1960s, only 30 per cent of all Egyptians lived in cities; now almost 50 per cent do. Forty per cent of the population is under 15. At some point, sustained demographic pressures may provoke fundamental political change - or breakdown. In Syria the story is much the same. It held its last free elections in 1954 and the country split along sectarian lines. Since then, political development has been arrested by sterile, neo-fascist military rulers. Syria in the mid-1990s is a more tractable and diluted version of Yugoslavia in the late 1980s - a society riven by regionally based ethnic groups, but without Marshal Tito’s rotten legacy of communism. Syria will not explode as Yugoslavia did, but some sort of upheaval probably lies ahead. The end of hostility with Israel, rather than strengthening the Syrian State, may unleash social and political forces that will, one day, unravel it. The other countries of the Arab world face, to lesser or greater degrees, these same threats. As Arab populations increase, they become increasingly difficult to control centrally, especially if some of their economies do not keep up. This is especially true in places where the regime is afforded little respect because it is uncivil or because it is dominated by a hostile group. As with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States have experienced great demographic and social changes during the past decades, but little or no political evolution. In North Africa, which has some of the largest youth populations and highest rates of urbanisation in the world, only Algeria so far has seen significant political evolution, and what a bloody, tumultuous evolution it has been. Iraq and Sudan, whose colonial borders are crucially averse to ethnic ones, may not be around in 10 or 15 years. Why will Arab populations no longer remain passive in the face of their hapless, vicious governments? After all, for much of history Arabs, as well as Turks and Persians, have been misruled by illegitimate regimes. In 1891 Viscount James Bryce observed that “worse administrations” than those in the Islamic world “can hardly be imagined”. But Bryce also noted that “when in any society opinion becomes self-conscious ... that society is already progressing, and soon finds means of organisms resistance and compelling reform”. There is no Islamic society that has not, in recent decades, become “self-conscious”. The communications revolution is bringing European soap operas into mud-brick Arab shanties, even as members of the Arab upper classes travel back and forth to the West and communicate on the Internet. All this, coupled with fast-forward urbanisation and population growth, means that Arab cultures are dramatically evolving: the Arab middle classes are more Westernised, the Arab poor more restive. Arabs have become aware of how their societies compare to others: this is what is new - and destabilising - about the region. A grand Shimon Peres-style peace treaty may lead to more Middle Eastern experiments with democracy. But, as we should already have learned from the elections in Algeria, this will not necessarily increase stability. Any form of democratisation - given the out-of-control -demographics of the region, the growing political awareness of partially educated and unsophisticated millions, and the preponderance of tired, cynical regimes - will be explosive, in some cases violently so. The coming tumult will not exclude Turkey and Iran, whose own highly dynamic populations are already undergoing immense change. In Turkey, Kurdish renaissance is further propelled by Islamisation that, in turn, is tied to internal migration and urbanisation, all of which erode the ability of the Ankara Government to satisfy the most sophisticated population in the Muslim Near East. Turkey’s stability often has been taken for granted. It should no longer be. The political class, as the recent elections show, is deadlocked, with Islamists a growing grassroots force. Turkey’s cohesion is as dependent on the military as it was a half century ago, when its experiment with democracy began. But it is Iran, with a population larger and better educated than Egypt’s, that has the greatest chance to remake the region. Since the Islamic revolution, Iran’s population has doubled and population growth has outpaced economic growth by 1.4 per cent a year since 1985. In the course of this-economic decline, Iran’s revolution has moved from fiery Jacobinism to ossified Bolshevism. The only remaining question is whether this is an early Brezhnev phase or a late Chernenko one. Iranian newspapers protest government corruption. Mosques are empty and Western culture ubiquitous. Anti-Americanism is dead, except inside certain government ministries and religious seminaries or when the regime hires a crowd for a demonstration; and even there one senses that the slogans have long ago lost puissance. Ironically, the Iranian regime’s very internal weakness may postpone its demise. Because Iranians can increasingly say and do what they want, few feel an immediate need to replace the Government. But when the counterrevolution does come it could further weaken the Iranian State, leading to upheavals in Iran’s ethnic border areas among Kurds, Azeri Turks and Turkomans. This would dramatically shift the regional power balance, just as calcified Arab regimes and their corrupt elites, from Morocco to the Gulf, come under greater popular pressure than ever. Keep in mind that the real change in the Middle East in 1978-79 was not the cold, anaemic peace between Egypt and Israel, but the Iranian revolution. The twist this time around may be that peace between Israel and Syria will further undermine the Iranian regime, which has bet - publicly, at least - on a continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Future leaders in Tehran may have to return to a strategy pursued by their predecessors - an alliance with the Jews of Palestine against the more numerous and hated Arabs. Indeed, as this scenario unfolds in the years to come, Israelis may play the same role that Jews played in the Middle East of the Middle Ages - - economic mediators between rival tribes and moving centres of power (as opposed to fixed States). Israel, in fact, is becoming more crassly bourgeois, even as its military officer corps is composed more and more of the religious. Israel’s slow transformation into a society that is more materialistic and, in some respects, more intensely religious may actually be necessary for Jewish survival in the high-tech, neo-medieval Middle East of the 21st century. The time when secular elites - whether American, Israeli or Arab - drive Middle Eastern history is coming to an end. Henceforth, the big changes will come from below: from people less sophisticated, less tolerant, less fatalistic and, in many cases, more crudely ambitious. One of the most unstable periods in the region’s long history may be under way. *Robert D. Kaplan is the author of The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century (Random). (The New Republic, The Australian, April 23, 1996).*

“25 African presidents killed in past 30 years” “INTERNAL conflicts in Africa have claimed the lives of 25 presidents and led to 78 unconstitutional changes of government in 30 years, according to the Organisation of African Unity. Noting these facts during a conference of African finance ministers, meeting under the United Nations Development Program, the OAU secretary-general, Mr Salim Ahmed Salim, spoke of “three decades of conflict”. “Ideological wars have become ever rarer,” he said, “as have wars between countries”, whatever their causes. In 1989 and 1990, only one of the world’s conflicts was waged between different African countries. However, since the 1980s, internal conflicts have multiplied. “Ethnic factors, powersharing and the control of resources” had been behind many such wars, he said. Mr Salim also highlighted “the refusal to give minority groups the chance to exercise political power. Religion has also become a major source of internal conflict,” he said, adding that “religious extremism has increased in Africa”. Other factors included “the absence of a culture of tolerance” and “the collapse of unified authority. Actual adjustment programs have held back income in urban areas ... (and) restricted social services, provoking situations of conflict. As society becomes increasingly free, the risk of ethnic and religious conflicts grows,” he said. Mr Salim also pointed out that African conflicts had contributed to limiting the success of development programs. “Clearly, no noteworthy results can be associated with the launching of such programs, strategies and plans. That Africa lagged behind other developing nations also strongly favoured conflict” (*The Australian*, Feb. 2, 1996).

THE ENVIRONMENT

“Report says grain crisis looming” “Washington: Shrinking amounts of arable land have caused grain reserves to fall to the lowest level on record, threatening future food supplies, a study by the Worldwatch Institute said. The low reserves come as many analysts predict that food demand will soar to the highest level in history. In 25 years, the world population will have increased to 7.8 billion people - 2.2 billion more than

today, the study said. "The challenge is pressing. By 2020, each of the world's people will rely on an average of just one-eighth of a soccer field to meet his or her grain needs," said Mr Gary Gardner, author of the study *Shrinking Fields: Cropland Loss in a World of Eight Billion*. In the US, for example, the expansion of cities, depletion of irrigation water and erosion have caused cropland loss as large in area as the State of New Jersey, the study said. Policymakers, who have allowed cropland to be paved over or degraded by erosion, can stop further damage by changing the attitudes and by viewing cropland as a key strategic resource no less important than oil reserves or armed forces, the study said. Still, practical solutions aren't easy to find. "Optimistic officials often overestimate the potential for expansion by including marginal land" in their count of arable land. Nevertheless, preservation programs and restrictive zoning laws can protect remaining farm land. The study also recommends long-term control and voluntary reduction of over-consumption of grain to shrink demand for grains. Much of the American public, however, was unaware of the "heavy burden" they placed on the nation's grain supply, Mr Gardner said. He said he was "surprised at the stickiness" of people, because despite high prices, consumers continue to eat grain-intensive red meat." (SMH, July 29, 1996).

"Global warming - Draught was unnatural, says expert" "Was Australia's devastating 1990-95 drought not the product of nature's whim but, in fact, due to the greenhouse effect? One of the world's top climate experts believes the evidence now strongly points that way. If true, the conclusion gives an alarming pointer to the potential high costs to Australia of global warming. In one year, from 1994 to 1995, the drought cost farmers an estimated \$1.95 billion from lost production and cut the national economic growth rate by 0.75 per cent. Drought conditions in Australia are linked to El Nino, a natural phenomenon whereby the usual westerly flow of warm air and water across the Pacific to Australia is interrupted. The El Nino that began in 1989, scientists agree, was unusual because it lasted so long. After examining atmospheric pressure records in Darwin since 1882, Dr Kevin Trenberth, head of the Climate Analysis Section at the US National Centre for Atmospheric Research, believes the trend for more El Ninos since 1976 and the prolonged 1990-95 event were together so unusual they were a 1-in-2,000-year event. "We think that was so unusual that the rules of the game have changed," Dr Trenberth told the *Herald*. "And the new rules are climate change." What is unclear, however, is whether the climate change shifting El Nino is because of the greenhouse effect. Last December, the world's top scientists concluded that "the balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate". Since the late 19th century, global air temperatures have climbed about 0.3 to 0.6 degrees Celsius. Since pre-industrial times, concentrations of the major greenhouse gases have risen steadily: carbon dioxide by about 30 per cent, methane by 145 per cent, nitrous oxide by 15 per cent. The build-up of these gases alters the flow of energy around the planet, trapping more of the sun's heat. Scientists predict global temperatures will rise by 1 to 3 degrees Celsius by 2100, bringing with it wilder and more unpredictable weather, more droughts, floods and storms, and new threats to human health from the spread of infectious diseases. (SMH, July 8, 1996).

"Growing problem unearthed" "Something strange has begun to change the growth patterns of trees, plants and grasses in the northern hemisphere: they're bursting into life in spring a week earlier than they used to and they seem to be growing an extraordinary 20 to 40 per cent more. The finding is further worrying evidence that global climate change owing to the build-up of atmospheric pollutants - the greenhouse effect - is gathering momentum. The United States research, published yesterday in *Nature*, is based on measurements of carbon dioxide in the air over Hawaii and Alaska. Globally, carbon dioxide levels fluctuate seasonally, dipping each spring as vegetation in cooler climate zones blooms and absorbs carbon dioxide by photosynthesis. The annual "drawdown" of carbon dioxide has started earlier and become more extreme than in the 1960s. "The timing and magnitude of that drawdown tells you something about the plants," Professor Charles Keeling, Professor of Oceanography at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, said yesterday. It's coming earlier and it's greater than it was before." In Alaska, 40 per cent more carbon dioxide was being absorbed in the growing season. In Hawaii - where the tropical climate makes seasonal variations less - 20 per cent more was absorbed. Professor Keeling said although it might appear implausible that northern hemisphere crops were growing 40 per cent more, farmers "will find out about it in the next little while, after people start looking for it". (SMH, July 11, 1996).

"Army evacuates 300,000 as Chinese flood toll rises" "Beijing: The death toll from China's devastating floods passed 450 as tens of thousands of troops evacuated 300,000 people from of the worst-struck cities. The provinces Guangxi, Jiangxi, Anhui, Guizhou and Xuanzhou are the hardest hit by the worst floods this century." (*The Australian*, July 8, 1996).

Devastating floods "China continues to suffer severe losses from continuing floods which have destroyed 5 million tons of grain and 133,000 hectares of cropland. There is fear of famine and epidemics in the areas devastated by the floods." (*ABC TV*, August 9, 1996)

"Typhoon kills 114" "Beijing: Typhoon Sally killed at least 114 people and left 110 missing when it slammed into Guangdong Province in southern China on Monday, officials said yesterday. Losses were estimated at 1.5 billion in Zhanjiang and Maoming, the two cities hardest hit by the typhoon." (SMH, Sept., 11, 1996).

"100,000 flee floods" "Dhaka: All major rivers were overflowing in Bangladesh, flooding large areas and forcing more than 100,000 people to flee their homes to safety, officials said. Eleven people were killed in the flooding last week, local newspapers said." (AP, SMH, July 8, 1996).

"Killer floods leave millions homeless" "DHAKA: Floods swept across the Indian sub-continent yesterday, claiming dozens of lives and displacing millions of people in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Bangladesh was hardest hit with floods ravaging one-third of the country killing 25 more people, raising the toll to 90 in a month of fierce monsoons. . . Meanwhile, authorities in China and Canada continued to mop up yesterday after devastating floods over the past weeks. Most of the dead in Bangladesh were children and old people who were swept away by swirling waters yesterday in the north and north-west of the country. Although the rains have eased this week, the Brahmaputra and Ganges rivers flowing from eastern India continued to spill over their banks. The government estimates that nearly 5 million people have been affected by the floods in 20 of 62 districts in Bangladesh. Nearly half of them live in low-lying areas of Dhaka and three neighbouring districts of Munshiganj, Manikgani and Narayanganj. In India, monsoon floods had wreaked havoc in Bihar, leaving 2 million people homeless and destroying farms and cattle in the eastern Indian State, the United News of India said yesterday. UNI said the situation in flood-hit Bihar turned critical yesterday after most of the State's swollen rivers burst their banks at several places, flooding hundreds of villages and farms in the State's impoverished north. Elsewhere police in the city of Bombay said seven people had been killed and six injured yesterday when a wall surrounding an automobile showroom collapsed after torrential rains lashed the western State of Maharashtra. Some 70 people were swept away in a flash flood earlier this week at a village near Nepal's border with China, the State-run RSS news agency said yesterday. More than 170 people are believed to have been killed in floods and landslides over the past two weeks amid unrelenting heavy rains in Nepal. In China, the flood situation remains grave although water levels have begun to recede, the Xinhua news agency quoted Vice Premier Mr Jiang Chunyun as warning yesterday. The United States was dispatching emergency aid worth \$US115,000 (\$146,200) to China as the flood-stricken south of the country braced for further torrential rains, the US embassy said yesterday. Unusually heavy rains have lashed southern and eastern China since the end of June, killing at least 716 people and causing severe flooding in nine provinces. In Canada, flooding that has killed 10 people and forced 11,000 from their homes in northern Quebec was disrupting the region's heavy industry yesterday, affecting big aluminium smelters and paper-making plants. Meanwhile, tropical storm Gloria increased strength as it neared the Philippines island of Luzon yesterday, threatening areas already in the path of a destructive mudflow from the Mount Pinatubo volcano." (AP, AFP, Reuters, *The Australian*, July 25, 1996).

"Killer storm" "Vietnam: At least 125 died and 107 were missing and feared dead after a whirlwind capsized fishing boats along the northern Vietnamese coast. The whirlwind, part of a storm system that dumped 200-350mm of rain on the coast, sank 22 boats and left 65 missing" (*The Sun-Herald*, August 18, 1996).

"The typhoon season has caused the worst flooding in decades in North Vietnam. So far 400 people have died, 900 are missing, 1/2 million houses damaged and 400,000 acres of farmland waterlogged. Authorities are concerned the flood waters will continue to wreck havoc as they move south." (SBS, TV, Sept. 8, 1996).

"76 dead or missing as Korean floods worsen" "Seoul: At least 76 South Korean soldiers and civilians were reported killed or missing yesterday after two days of heavy rain triggered landslides and left about 30,000 people homeless, officials said. "We expect more casualties as many areas were left with telecommunications and roads cut off," said Mr Kwon Yong-Suk, a spokesman for the Central Disaster Agency. Forty-four South Korean soldiers and 14 civilians were yesterday confirmed dead. Another eight soldiers and 10 civilians were missing in a spate of landslides and rain-related accidents that also left about 80 people injured. The President, Mr Kim Young-Sam, flew back from a summer holiday and called an emergency meeting of top aides. More than 50 centimetres of rain has hit the central and northern areas of the Korean peninsula since Friday night. Meteorological officials also reported heavy downpours in North Korea and warned of widespread damage in the North, already ravaged by last year's floods. "Damage is extensive along border areas," a Central Disaster Agency official said, indicating North Korean military units along the demilitarised zone have been hard hit." (SMH, July 29, 1996).

"UN warns world of big dry to come" "Istanbul: Most cities in the developing world will face extreme water shortages by 2010, the United Nations human settlement conference has warned. More than 1.5 billion people in cities will face environments that threaten life and health by 2025 unless a revolution in urban problem-solving takes place, the conference's opening report said on Monday. The UN's Habitat secretary-general, Mr Waly N'Dow, said water would run out in many cities by 2010 on present trends. "Cities have the resources to solve problems - 50 to 80 per cent of most developing countries' Gross National Product comes from cities - but they are not adequately prepared for the huge influx of people from the country," Mr N'Dow said. Habitat II, the last major UN conference this century, seeks to address the urban ills of poverty, homelessness, and social and environmental decay - but participating countries do not agree on how to treat these problems. On the first day of the conference, the US stood out against demands by developing countries that housing be given the status of a human right needing international financial help. The European Union backed the developing countries' demands, but Habitat officials say the US and some other developed countries were wary of seeing housing as a human right for fear of incurring legal obligations to the world's homeless. The UN said cities in the developing world were not the only ones facing water problems, which already claim 10 million lives a year through disease caused by dirty drinking water. The report listed Cairo, Lagos, Dhaka, Beijing, Calcutta and Sao Paulo among developing cities facing the greatest water problems, but said cities such as Houston, Los Angeles, Warsaw, Cardiff and Tel Aviv also faced severe shortages. "Water is going to be the most hotly contested urban issue facing the world community in the 21st century," Mr N'Dow said. "The water crisis is coming about not only because of a lack of water in some regions, but also from the inability of governments to make the necessary investments in a timely manner to ensure that water is available in all cities." The UN statement said about 50 per cent of the developing world's water was wasted or lost through inefficiency. More than 1 billion people could not get clean drinking water. About 100 million people worldwide, mostly women and children, are homeless and up to 600 million people poorly and unhealthily housed. The report recommended private-public partnerships and community involvement to help combat the problems, and announced the establishment of a database on how cities cope with population problems." (Reuter, SMH, May 6, 1996).

"Chinese quake kills over 200" "Beijing, Sunday: One of the deadliest earthquakes to hit south-west China in years has killed 210 people, injured more than 3,700 and left tens of thousands of survivors huddled outdoors for fear of more tremors, officials said today. Squads of hundreds of soldiers and police, backed by teams of doctors, were searching for survivors through the rubble of mud-brick homes and remote mountain villages around Lijiang, about 2,000 kilometres south-west of Beijing. The death toll may rise as rescue workers reach more remote mountain hamlets. The tremor, which rocked the region yesterday, measured 7.0 on the Richter scale, and more than 150 aftershocks were recorded, including 18 measuring more than 4.0 on the Richter scale. Earthquakes of magnitude 6.0 can cause widespread damage." (SMH, February 5, 1996).

"Rural mice plague a living nightmare" "SOMETIMES Wes Kerslake feels like an actor in some B-grade horror movie. "It's the squeaking behind the walls that really gets on your nerves," the beefy Queensland baker said as he rolled shortbread dough in his bakery at Taroom, 450km north-west of Brisbane. "When you hear that sound, it makes your stomach churn. And then there's the smell. That awful rancid smell of mice... the whole bloody town stinks. It's like living in a nightmare." The three extra hours Mr Kerslake has to work every day just to keep his bakery clean are a painful reminder that he is in the front line of a crisis that is all too real. For more than a year, millions of mice have ravaged crops, terrorised homes, caused extensive damage to small businesses and disrupted lives in a vast area stretching from Taroom south to northern NSW and from Toowoomba west to Roma. The plague appears to be on the wane in Taroom, but Mr Kerslake, who has been baiting mice since April last year, has seen their numbers drop off before, only to come back with a vengeance weeks later. He is catching about 300 mice a day, which seems nightmarish enough, but is nothing compared with the more than 2000 caught in one night two weeks ago. Southern Queensland is full of horror stories about mice. On a grazing property at Millmerran on the southern Darling Downs, Mrs Bettina McClymont has been forced to put her children to bed with old Akubra hats on their heads to stop mice from running through their hair. Throughout the plague area, people are waking up with mice droppings in their sheets. "We have to wash our clothes every day," Mr Kerslake's wife, Sue, said. "If you leave a pile of dirty clothes, the mice will get into them and start chewing them up." They are also partial to electrical wiring, putting television sets and home computers out of order, and even rendering cars immobile. Mr Kerslake knows a fencer who camps out for a week at a time. "His wife told me he's got sores on him from trying to sleep in his swag. The mice climb into bed with him. His hair just stinks of mice." Government experts and farmers' leaders are baffled by the plague, which began in April last year in the wake of the five-year drought, the worst on record. The president of the Queensland Graingrowers Association, Mr Ian Macfarlane, said mice plagues in the past usually lasted no longer than about six months. He said an extensive aerial baiting program late last year had been largely successful. "But they seem to have turned their attention to towns and people's homes since then." (The Australian, May 23, 1996).

"Quake deaths" "Fourteen people were killed and 226 injured by an earthquake that struck inner Mongolia yesterday, toppling houses and shaking northern China." (The Sun-Herald, May 5, 1996).

"Snow puts out huge blaze" "ULAN BATOR: The Mongolian army fired rain-making shells into the sky yesterday, triggering a 15cm snowfall that put out a huge fire threatening to engulf the capital. The snowfall extinguished the blaze 30km from Ulan Bator, but the fires continued to rage elsewhere. "The snowfall started 20 minutes after we shot first bullets," said an army officer returning from Terelz nature reserve where the shells were fired. Three weeks of fires have killed at least five people and destroyed eight million hectares of forest pastureland, causing as much as \$A2.3 billion of damage to the fragile economy, officials say." (The Daily Telegraph, May 2, 1996).

"1000 feared dead in Bangladesh's doomsday tornado" "I THOUGHT it was the end of the world ... All hell broke loose," local businessman Mr Lal Miah, 50, said after surviving a tornado that killed more than 400 and flattened thousands of homes when it struck four villages in remote northern Bangladesh with apocalyptic force. Mr Miah was one of an estimated 32,000 people injured by what one survivor described as a "funnel of fire" that ploughed, through homes, plucked human beings into the sky and turned innocent rice seeds into lacerating missiles. "I started praying before I became unconscious," Mr Miah said. "There is nothing left for us to start life again ... It was the worst storm I have ever seen." A district official said: "A vast area has been sucked up by a huge whirlpool. Nothing is standing." As the official death count rose yesterday to 442, officials said they feared the toll could approach 1000 as bodies still lay scattered around. . . The fierce but short-lived storm struck late on Monday, with winds estimated at up to 150kmh ripping through the Tangail district, about 120km north of the capital, Dhaka. The subdistricts of Bashail, Gopalpur, Kalihati and Sakhipur took the brunt, officials said. In Mirikpur, bodies still lay scattered amid ruins and

uprooted trees as rescue workers tried to help trapped survivors first and send them to hospitals. But the village, along with several others nearby, has been eradicated from the map. Trees have been uprooted, corrugated iron roofing sheets torn into pieces, as if they were pieces of cardboard. "There was a hailstorm, then heavy rains and suddenly we heard growling sounds. . . Before we could understand anything our house was blown away by something that looked like a tunnel of fire," a survivor said." (*The Australian*, may 16, 1996).

"Weather blamed for food crisis" "WARMER temperatures, erratic weather and soaring population growth had contributed to a global food shortage, a Washington think tank said yesterday. "Ironically, in an era of high technology, of space exploration, the World Wide Web, and organ transplants, humanity was suddenly struggling in 1996 with one of the most ancient of challenges - how to make it to the next harvest," said the Worldwatch president, Mr Lester Brown. "We have definitely turned a corner," he said in announcing the group's annual environmental statistics, called Vital Signs. The Worldwatch report, which was released yesterday, said the average global temperature set a new record of 59.7 degrees Fahrenheit (15.39 degrees Celsius) in 1995, up from the previous record of 59.6 F (15.38 C) set in 1990. Contributing to the record average was a heatwave that hit the US Midwest, withering the corn crop and helping push 1996 world grain stocks to their lowest level ever in terms of consumption. Mr Brown's reports are considered too pessimistic by critics who say market forces and further advances in grain genetics will keep the world food supply in balance. But Mr Brown said the 10 warmest years in the past 130 have all occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, and the three warmest years all came this decade, evidence that global warming was now an established trend. Higher world temperatures, he said, had upset the climate balance and were probably responsible for erratic stormy weather, such as the tornado that hit Bangladesh a week ago, killing hundreds of people. The weather caused global damage worth on average more than \$US20 billion (\$25.11 billion) a year in the 1990s, double the level for the 1980s, Worldwatch said. Losses were almost \$US40 billion last year, of which \$US8.5 billion were insured, up from about \$US23 billion in each of the previous two years, insurance industry figures showed." (*Reuters, The Australian*, May 20, 1996).

"The hunger that gnaws at the soul of Africa" "A group of Liberian children, their bodies withered by severe malnutrition, stand waiting for a food convoy - the first in more than nine months. As the trucks carrying 74 tones of food rolled in a cloud of dust into the rural city of Tubmanburg, the children broke into ecstatic cheers. More than 150,000 people have died in the civil war ravaging this tiny West African country in the last seven years. And although there are no official figures, aid workers have compared the suffering and starvation now faced by the country's population to the recent famines in Somalia and Mozambique." (*SMH*, Oct. 5, 1996).

"What the world doesn't need now is love, sweet love" "NEW YORK: If life felt a little more crowded in 1995, you had good reason - the world's population jumped by 100 million people, the biggest 12-month increase ever. And that, the United Nations Population Institute announced yesterday, is not good news if current rates continue and broad ranging birth control policies are not implemented. Institute president Werner Fornos said unless family planning was actively promoted and supported, the world's population would reach a staggering 14 billion from the current 5.75 billion by 2015. "Some three billion young people will be entering their reproductive years in this coming generation," he said at a news conference. "How well these young people are able to implement the awesome responsibility of parenting will make the difference between our setting a course for an environmental Armageddon in the 21st century or a better quality of life." But Mr Fornos said the challenge was a very big one. Ninety per cent of 1995's growth was in poor countries already torn by civil strife, social unrest and "brutal poverty". If birth control policies were successfully developed and implemented worldwide, the globe's population would stabilise to a far more sustainable eight billion by 2015. To explain the dramatic size of the problem, Mr Fornos compared the American State of Iowa to Bangladesh, two places roughly the same size in land mass. At its current rate, Iowa would take a century to double its population to just under three million, while Bangladesh would double its population to 128 million in the next 30 years, he said. Overall, the world was on a diverging track for population growth. Developing countries would double their numbers in 32 to 36 years, while industrialised nations such as Australia will take 430 years to do the same. In all, 4.5 billion people live in the poorest countries - and they produced 90 per cent of this year's leap. The global distribution of teenagers was another gloomy conclusion in the "1995 World Population Overview". Industrialised nations have about 20 per cent of their population under the age of 15, while in developing countries the proportion rises to 38 per cent. In Africa alone, 45 per cent of the population is under 15. Mr Fornos said this next generation of three billion literally held the key to the world's near future. "Their ability to control their fertility will unquestionably determine the future of the quality of life on earth," he said. The 100 million jump in population in 1995 was the equivalent of adding another Mexico to the world. But despite the worrying tone of the report, Mr Fornos said the world had the capacity to handle and solve the impending problems. "I think we'll solve this," he said, pointing out 30 countries - including Thailand, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Mexico and Brazil were now reporting declining birth rates. China, the most populous nation, was a role model in birth control. In 1965 the average Chinese woman had 6.5 live babies in her lifetime, while the figure was now 1.4. Africa emerged as the problem continent. Around the globe 80 countries were reproducing at a rate which would double their populations within the next 30 years - 43 of them being in Africa." (*The Daily Telegraph*, December 29, 1995).

"Halve world's fishing fleet, scientist warns" "THE capacity of the world's fishing fleet would need to be reduced by up to 50 per cent before sustainable levels could be reached, an international fisheries congress was warned yesterday. Dr Pamela Mace, a fisheries scientist at the United States National Marine Fisheries Service, told the Second World Fisheries Congress in Brisbane that fleet overcapacity was the single most important factor threatening the long-term viability of exploited fish stocks and the fisheries that depended on them. In a keynote address on the opening day of the congress attended by 800 delegates from 49 countries, Dr Mace said the number and tonnage of the world's decked vessels had doubled between 1970 and 1992. Yet it was estimated that world fishing fleets were operating at an estimated net loss of \$US54 billion (\$69 billion), mainly offset, by government subsidies. At the same time, she said recent data suggested that supply may have peaked with almost 70 per cent of marine fisheries classified as either fully or over-exploited. While there were relatively few estimates of the extent of fleet overcapacity, with estimates varying between fisheries, Dr Mace said "overall reduction of the order of at least 50 per cent seem to be required for many fisheries". She warned that addressing overcapacity would be the key to solving many other problems facing the fisheries industry."

(*The Australian*, July 30, 1996)."

"Endangered Animals" A quarter of world mammals species at risk, survey finds. An international conservation organisation's analysis of endangered animals has produced some alarming results. Rick Weiss takes a walk on the wild side. Washington: A quarter of the world's mammal species are threatened with extinction, and about half may be gone in as little as a decade, according to the most complete global analysis ever compiled. The report, which leading conservationists described as surprising and frightening, was released on Thursday by the IUCN - World Conservation Union, the recently renamed international body which has collected endangered species data for more than 35 years. Unlike previous compilations of the group's red list of endangered species, the latest version uses a newly adopted set of objective criteria for endangerment, scientists said. The new system suggests previous estimates of the number of endangered species worldwide may well have been too low. The United States Interior Secretary, Mr Bruce Babbitt, called the report "probably the most thorough" scientific assessment of the state of the world's wildlife ever. "It clearly indicates that unless people of all nations make extraordinary efforts, we face a looming natural catastrophe of almost biblical proportions," he said." (*SMH*, Oct. 5, 1996).

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

"Progress is a two way street" "The concept of progress contains elements of good and evil, says Moshe Gutnick, while Peter Slezak believes the world has almost Orwellian overtones. We live in a time like no other. Every day we progress in the realms of science and technology in ways unimaginable. Last year's science fiction is this year's fact, yesterday's dream is today's reality. We can walk on the moon, shuttle back and forth into space; we have eradicated smallpox from the world; we are fighting cancer on all fronts. Many of the childhood

diseases that were so debilitating only 50 years ago rarely show their ugly face - polio, tetanus and others ... But have we really progressed? Bubonic plague ravages parts of India. Poverty and hunger of the most horrific proportion still affect many parts of the world. We saw events in the first half of this century from the genocide of the Armenians to the Holocaust of the Jews. We might have hoped we had progressed and learnt our lesson. Just to jar us back into reality we are faced with the killing fields of Pol Pot and the rivers of blood in Burundi. We can cure illness like never before, yet we spawn the Port Arthur massacre. Is this progress and what is progress? Judaism teaches an amazing insight into the biblical story of the Tree of Knowledge from which Adam and Eve ate. In Jewish writings it is referred to as the "Tree of Knowledge - Good and Evil". The implication is that knowledge has within it, by definition, the ability to produce either good or evil. The greater the knowledge and the greater the advancement of knowledge, the greater potential there is for good and, at the same time, evil.

The power of the atom can be used to create weapons of mass destruction, yet its energy can be harnessed for the common good. It is not knowledge itself which is good or evil, but humankind's application of that knowledge. If then, knowledge is neutral it can be applied either for good or evil, what was the sin Adam and Eve? Judaism teaches further insight into that famous story in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge on the eve of the Sabbath and the fruit was not Michelangelo's apple, but fruit of the grapevine. If they would have held out only until Friday night they would have been commanded by God to take those grapes, squeeze the juice from them and sanctify the Sabbath with their nectar. The failure of Adam and Eve was that they did not realise that the gift of Knowledge was only obtainable if its application was in accordance with the will of God. The Garden of Eden was a place where Knowledge was used only in accordance with God's will. When they partook of the knowledge in contravention of God's will they were driven from the garden. From that day on, mankind has been faced with the challenge of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. When man uses knowledge for good, he creates for himself a world which has the potential to be a Garden of Eden. When he abuses knowledge and forgets the divine direction, then not only is he driven from the garden but he creates a hell on earth. We must recognise that all our scientific and medical progress and advance must be governed by a higher law; before we taste of that fruit, each time we must analyse whether we are partaking in accordance with the will of a higher morality, or whether it is to service evil, oppression or personal power and discrimination. Progress - the Tree of Knowledge - has grown and grown. We have in the past 50 years advanced more than in the entire history of mankind. We can expect that knowledge to continue to grow exponentially. The fruit is before us. Are we going to create the Garden of Eden or bring about a hell on earth? The choice is ours." (*Moses Gutnick, President of the Rabbinical Council of NSW*).

PROGRESS is one of those words whose reassuring connotations inspire confidence and doubts when some questionable policy is to be foisted upon us. After all, who could be against progress? Thus economic growth, industrialisation and technological development are all equated with progress. The very possibility that these might be harmful becomes not merely implausible but unthinkable. The appeal to "progress", as to "democracy" and "freedom", is generally fraudulent, used as a substitute for rational argument. For example, in debate about the environment we see what George Orwell called the connection between politics and the debasement of language. Today's purveyors of Newspeak, the proselytisers for progress, have inverted logic and reversed the meanings of ordinary English words. Thus, concern for private profit is "realism" but concern for nature's survival is "green hysteria". Environmentalism merely an "ideology", while benefit of the powerful and privileged is "progress". Orwell would have been impressed. Modern science, some say, not the supreme achievement of the human intellect, but one cultural practice among others. Our preferred myths have no better credentials than Zeus on Olympus. Four-dimensional spacetime is no better than Aboriginal Dreamtime. According to "post-modernist" doctrine, the principles of Western thought are merely historically relative, culturally conditioned preferences such as sexual customs, kinship patterns or clothing habits. Our logic is no more compulsory than our cuisine. Besides an exhilarating radicalism, such doctrines offer privileged access to insights which are not expressible in words of less than 10 syllables. The focus of intense concern is not doctrines in the world which we may have caused or might alleviate, but the "problematic of foregrounding and deconstructing the logocentrism of totalizing hegemonic discourses and binary divisions". It remains conveniently obscure what any of this means, why it is bad, and why no self-respecting intellectual should be guilty of it.

Again we see language used as an instrument for concealing or preventing thought rather than for expressing it. In these fashionable circles, not only literature but the products of science are "texts" as well. "Truth" is relative. Theories, perhaps even the world, are supposed to be "socially constructed" and scientific success is a matter of "extracting compliance" rather than intellectual assent. On this score, astrology deserves equal time in the classroom with astronomy. If uttered outside the seminar room, these ideas would be symptomatic of clinically severe derangement. We can scarcely afford such assaults on reason since it appears that we have a less tenuous grip on rationality than previously thought. In view of the dire problems facing the world, both the corporate and the "intellectual" subversion of our residual rationality are not merely pathological but suicidal. (*Peter Slexak teaches in the School of the History and Philosophy of Science at UNSW*). (*SMH*, July 29, 1996).

"Poets live longer and love better" "THE romantic image of the poet as a tortured soul is wildly off-target, according to a psychiatrist. Poets are more troubled by manic depression, but less prone to alcoholism or sexual problems than other writers, claims Dr Felix Post. "My theory is that poets write about their feelings, about love and about nature, which is much less stressful than writing about other people's joys and tragedies," he said. "Charles Dickens, for example, was so gripped by his writing that he used to cry over death scenes." Dr Post, who recently retired from the Maudsley Hospital in London, admits he was surprised by his findings when he conducted a study of creative writers, the results of which are published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*. Of 100 writers, 54 per cent of the playwrights were alcoholics, but only 31 per cent of poets. Poets were twice as likely as novelists to live to at least the age of 74, and three times as likely as playwrights to have a successful marriage." (*The Daily Telegraph*, May 2, 1996).

"Sacrifices to the cult of victimhood" "Hey, it's okay to be insufferable at work, says Robert Lusetch. In the US, the law's on your side. "PSYCHIATRY is making the world crazy. It's not exactly a contention you can voice in these depressingly correct times, for fear that someone will become convinced you have a "mental illness" and demand you seek "treatment" or, worse, be "medicated". But after digesting the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, I'll take my chances. I can bite my tongue no longer. The effect of this headspinning legislation goes something like this. You know that objectionable, insufferable co-worker who is always late, forever recalcitrant, loudmouthed, sabotages everything, always puts a wet spoon back in the sugar container after stirring coffee and is prone to temperamental outbursts? The one you want to encourage to go and play in peak-hour traffic or win the lottery, anything as long as they get the hell out of your life? The obnoxious malcontent who by some quirk of planetary alignment still has a job? Know the one? Well, thanks to the ADA, in the United States it will be *you* who has to attend sensitivity training classes so as to accommodate them. Why? Because in this society where the cult of victimhood is spreading like a cultural Ebola virus, eating away at morality and personal responsibility, the aforementioned co-worker is a new strain of victim. And, by God, victims have rights. This piece of befuddled legislation means that, to borrow the words of one disbelieving columnist, 'you have a right to be a colossally obnoxious jerk on the job'. Not just slightly offensive, or your right won't kick in, but really insufferable, objectionable, the worst maggot imaginable. Only then is it guaranteed that you can't be fired or even demoted, or discriminated against in any way.

It all began when a gaggle of politicians wanted to do the right thing. Or to be seen to be doing the right thing. In order to prevent Americans with physical disabilities from being discriminated against by their employers - a fine notion - Congress passed the ADA. But then a mental illness lobby group declared that the Act wasn't fair because it excluded its constituents (which, according to the latest estimates, could be one in four of us, up from one in a thousand at the turn of the century). So the ADA - which was intended to do things like guarantee wheelchair access to disabled workers - expanded its definition of disability to include "mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities". Suddenly, pictures of my old newspaper office flashed before me. Obviously, others had similar notions because in the ADA's first 15 months, 10 per cent of all complaints were pertaining to mental disabilities, second only to back problems. What constitutes a mental disability? The regulations say "mental impairments" include "any mental or psychological disorder such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness". But the politicians didn't get around to providing definitions for emotional or mental illness. So the authority has now

become the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, published by the American Psychiatric Association - a 900-page document US writer George Will concluded had "the potential to produce legal chaos and moral confusion" throughout the country. Consider the guide's definition of "Oppositional Defiant Disorder": a pattern of "negativistic, defiant, disobedient and hostile behaviour toward authority figures". Included in diagnostic criteria are "often loses temper", "often deliberately annoys people", "is often touchy" or "spiteful and vindictive". Know the type? Well, you can't sack them. Instead you have to send your other employees to sensitivity training so they can "learn" to get along with the poor victim. There's more. "Antisocial personality disorder" ("a pervasive pattern of disregard for ... the rights of others ... callous, cynical ... an inflated and arrogant self-appraisal"); "histrionic personality disorder" ("excessive emotionality and attention-seeking ... inappropriate sexually provocative or seductive"); "narcissistic personality disorder" ("grandiosity, need for admiration ... boastful and pretentious ... interpersonally exploitative ... may assume that they do not have to wait in line"). The list goes on. And on. These and other character flaws are being worn as badges of pride by those buffoons who manipulate gullible, politically correct sensibilities for their own end. It's enough to drive you crazy." (*The Australian*, May 3, 1996).

"Mardi Gras straight ban" "Heterosexuals will be banned from Sydney's Gay Lesbian Mardi Gras party following a decision by organisers yesterday. Gay, lesbian or transsexual people will be allowed to attend while heterosexuals and bisexuals would have to apply to the Mardi Gras board for admission. As a voluntary organisation, the Mardi Gras is not covered by the NSW Anti Discrimination Act. The organisers deny their policy is discriminatory but expect a backlash." (*The Sun-Herald*, April 28, 1996).

"Mardi Gras for all" "I READ with interest that heterosexuals will be banned from the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras party (or, at least, must apply for admission). While this may not be discriminatory it certainly is exclusionary and does untold harm to the ideal of acceptance and harmony, that, I believe, we should be aiming for as a community. Having attended both Carnivale in Rio De Janeiro and Mardi Gras in New Orleans in the past two years, I feel sorry that a potentially great event that all Sydneysiders and Australians would love to celebrate, our own Mardi Gras, is continually constrained and tainted by the small-minded attitudes of its organisers, and not allowed to flourish into a truly communal event. Justin Paoloni (*The Sun-Herald*, May 5, 1996).

"India leads world's AIDS toll" "VANCOUVER: India has quickly emerged as the country with the largest number of people infected with the AIDS virus, only a few years after it was first detected here. The head of the United Nations AIDS program, Dr Peter Piot, said on Sunday that more than 3 million of India's 950 million people were infected with the virus that causes AIDS. "It apparently began circulating in the subcontinent about a decade later than in the United States, where the disease was first diagnosed in 1981, he told the opening of the 11th international AIDS meeting here... There are 22 million infected people worldwide, and 5.6 million dead. 8,500 new infections occur every day (including children), or 3.1 million a year. Ninety per cent of new infections occur in the developing world. Two thirds of new infections are in the sub-Sahara Africa. "Most pharmaceutical companies had abandoned the effort to develop a vaccine against the human immunodeficiency virus after concluding that nations with the most pressing need for a vaccine were too poor to afford one, leading AIDS researchers of the conference said." (*SMH*, July 9, 96)

"AIDS fears" "Vancouver: EASTERN Europe may face a "catastrophic" surge in HIV infection in the next few years due to an explosion in intravenous drug use and unprotected sex, according to AIDS officials from the region. Syphilis and several other sexually transmitted diseases are raging through many of the former Soviet republics, and experts fear HIV now at a very low level relative to the rest of the world - will mirror this trend soon." (*The Australian*) July 2, 1996).

"Gays celebrate court victory" "WASHINGTON: American homosexuals celebrated their biggest victory in a decade yesterday when the Supreme Court ruled as unconstitutional Colorado's attempt to ban laws protecting gays men and women from discrimination. Gay-rights activists were thrilled by the ruling, which gave them a powerful weapon to fight a backlash against homosexuality. "This is an outstanding moral victory," the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign said. Six of the Supreme Court's nine Justices said Colorado was wrong to identify people by a single trait and deny them any protection, but the three most conservative members dissented strongly. Colorado had adopted "an entirely reasonable provision which does not even disfavour homosexuals in any substantive sense but merely denies them preferential treatment", wrote Mr Antonin for the minority. Gay-rights activists had organised a boycott of Colorado that cost it about \$49 million in lost tourism. Ultra-conservative religious groups were outraged. "Homosexuals are not an aggrieved minority and disapproval of their choice of a deviant lifestyle is not the equivalent of bigotry or prejudice based on some arbitrary factor such as race or gender," the Reverend Lou Sheldon, chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition, said. The ruling marked the culmination of years of vocal battles between gay activists and ultra-conservatives that started in 1992 when three Colorado cities decided to pass legislation to protect the homosexual community, leading authorities to can the referendum." (*The Times*, *APP*, *The Australian*, May 22, 1996).

"Very foundation of our society at risk - Gay couple ban" "WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives has voted to outlaw gay marriage in federal law, even if a State decides to allow same-sex couples to marry. The chamber voted 342-67 to pass the Defence Of Marriage Act yesterday. The Act is a measure conservatives introduced to head off a Hawaii court case that could make that State the first to recognise gay marriage. The Senate has yet to take action on the issue. President Bill Clinton has said that since he is opposed to same-sex marriages, he would sign the bill. But he agreed with congressional Democrats who had charged that the bill was politically motivated. The margin of victory in the House was despite some Democrats waging a bitter fight against the bill, accusing Republicans of trying to whip up anti-gay hatred to persuade voters to vote for Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole. Supporters of the bill said they feared that if Hawaii was free to recognise gay marriages, the Constitution would require all other States to accept that gay marriages performed in Hawaii were legal. Bob Barr, one of the Republican sponsors of the bill, said that with the Hawaii court case looming "the very foundation of our society" was at risk. "The flames of hedonism, the flames of narcissism, the flames of self-centred morality are licking at the very foundations of our society, the family unit," he said. Opponents accused Republicans of engaging in presidential politicking. "This is nothing more than election-year pandering," said Democrat Martin Meehan. Under the bill, married gay couples would remain ineligible for spousal benefits under the social security and medical care programs and any other federal reserved for heterosexual married couples. During debate, some members quoted passages from the Bible in arguing that God meant marriage to be a union of a man and a woman. Anything else threatened the survival of American culture, they said. "A God-given principle is under attack," said Republican Steve Buyer. Barney Frank, one of three openly gay members of Congress, said many of his colleagues were in their second and third marriages despite other passages in the Bible that prohibited divorce or remarriage after divorce. President Clinton joined the fray yesterday by repeating assurances that he opposed discrimination against any group of Americans. But he would nevertheless sign the bill, the White House said, because he "has long opposed same-sex marriage".

(*AP*, *The Sun-Herald*, July 14, 1996).

"Farm was paedophile resort: ex resident" "A prominent Sydney gay nightclub manager and founder of the gay newspaper *Campaign* had taken a homeless 14-year old boy from Wollongong to his South Coast farm and had sex with him for six to eight months, the Police Royal Commission heard yesterday. That boy, now 32, known as W83, said yesterday he had been introduced to the manager, W17, by the former lord mayor of Wollongong, Tony Bevan. W83 had accepted accommodation from W17 because he was destitute, owning only the clothes he stood in. W 17 had turned his farm at Kangaroo Valley into a bed-and-breakfast resort for paedophiles and, apparently as a diversion, W1 7 had filmed two boys committing acts of bestiality with pigs and a calf." (*SMH*, May 17, 1996).

"WORLD IS OUR WITNESS" "FOREIGN correspondents based in Australia yesterday told how the rest of the world has viewed the Port Arthur massacre [On April 28, 1996, Martin Bryant gunned down 35 people in the Tasmanian town of Port Arthur]. Red Harrison, the BBC's

Australian correspondent for 15 years, said he didn't think the Port Arthur shooting would have an adverse effect on Australia's image. "The whole world is preoccupied with death and violence and the shooting shows that Australia is just as susceptible to violence as any other country," he said. But Joelle Dietrich, Australian correspondent for French daily newspaper *Le Figaro*, said: "A lot of French people see Australia as an extension of the US and it is considered to be a nation with a strong gun culture. The thing that amazes me about this tragedy is that you can be arrested for homosexual activities because it is illegal in Tasmania, yet they have the weakest gun laws in the country." Ratih Hardjomo, correspondent for the Indonesian daily *Kompas*, said the shooting revealed that Australia, like other Western countries, had lost its sense of communality. "Before it's too late, Australians need to go back and strengthen their community ties and not focus so much on the individual." Esther Blank, a Sydney-based reporter for German television and radio, said many Germans thought of Australia as one of the world's last wildernesses. A lot of German people tell me they want to go and visit Tasmania because of its wilderness, clean air and because it's such a safe, peaceful place," she said. "But that image has been shattered for a lot of them. People were very surprised that an everyday person could get a gun that is used for killing people in armies. The shooting has made them realise Australia has a violent side too."

(*The Sun-Herald*, May 5, 1996).

"Capitalism may yet be a 'dinosaur'" In his latest book, *The Future of Capitalism*, Lester Thurow borrows the biological expression, "punctuated equilibrium", to explain the dynamics of the current global economic condition. This is rather an apocalyptic proposition in that "punctuated equilibrium" refers to when the normal extended evolutionary process is replaced by a sudden environmental change and what has been the dominant species dies out to be replaced by some other species. Evolution takes a quantum leap. Natural selection, which normally works on the margins, suddenly alters the core of the system. The best known example of this is the extinction of the dinosaurs that had dominated the Earth's surface for 130 million years, only to be replaced in a relatively short time frame by mammals. It is Thurow's contention that the global economy is now undergoing a similar experience, that the dominant culture of capitalism is exposed to a collection of forces which are now imposing a dangerous acceleration on the normal gradual evolutionary process. Thurow argues it is quite possible - though by no means certain - that capitalism as we know it, may face the same fate as the dinosaurs. Thurow, who is a professor at the MIT's Sloan School of Economics, has made something of a name for himself down the years as a controversial populariser of rather scary economic scenarios. As such, he incurs the wrath - and even the contempt - of some of his academic peers, who feel his commercial instincts sometimes overwhelm his scholarship. However, Thurow has served a useful role by pushing major economic issues into the popular marketplace. One of his earlier works, for example, *The Zero Sum Game*, explored the implications of continuing with income redistribution policies as economic growth slowed down. The theme reappears in his latest book, though it is now part of a much more wide-ranging exploration of the implications rising from the inherent contradiction between capitalism and democracy. The former is an economic culture which promotes inequalities, while the latter is a political system based on the notion of equality. In the relatively brief history of capitalist democracies, the contradictions have been defused by other factors at work such as the acceptance within nation States of a social contract, the delivery of which was actually assisted by the Organisation structure of capitalism which is now changing. The presence of alternative economic systems such as communism, was an important factor in maintaining a socially acceptable balance between capitalism and democracy, in that successful capitalists accepted State intervention as preferable to the alternative system. Now communism has collapsed - as feudalism and fascism did before it - the balance of power within capitalist democracies is shifting. This process is being reinforced by the technological revolution which has created the era of what Thurow calls man-made brainpower industries, which have the social consequence of creating much more atomistic and individualistic societies. A critical by-product of the emergence of brainpower industries has been a growing inequality in wages. The decline of traditional social institutions such as the family unit and the role of organised religion, has seen a shift in popular culture where mores are determined by cultural forces such as television, which celebrate consumption at the expense of thrift. Then there is the impact of demographics, where political institutional arrangements that in the past softened the hard edges of Darwinian capitalism, are now having the opposite effect as aging affluent societies struggle to service their welfare systems. This challenge is exacerbated by the development of a global economy where technology transfer is destroying the traditional pattern of comparative advantage between nation States. At the same time the spirit of international co-operation, which was a defensive but positive response to the period of the Cold War, is breaking down. In his litany of forces now impacting on the global economic scene, Thurow includes his belief that inflation has now been defeated. Because central banks continue to behave as though this is not the case; economic growth is being unnecessarily inhibited. The very fact that capitalism is now the one successful economic system, suggests to him uncomfortable historical analogies with similar periods. Pharaonic, Roman, medieval and mandarin economies also had no competitors and they simply stagnated for centuries before they disappeared. The threat to capitalism is not of an alternative system but of social disorganisation and civil disorder. In the United States, which has long been the pacesetter of successful capitalism, these developments are already evident in parts of some major cities. Although Thurow's explanation of why we are experiencing a period of punctuated equilibrium seemingly leads to an inevitably bleak conclusion, he ends on a high note, likening "capitalism" to Columbus's flagship. Even though Columbus got a lot wrong, says Thurow, he was basically smart and lucky and he found the Americas - and they happened to be full of gold. Hardly a convincing case on which to forecast a promising future but Lester Thurow, an entrepreneurial populariser, knows it is best to finish on an upbeat note." (Max Walsh, *SMH*, April 19, 1996)

"CHINA - Jiang banks on moral clampdown" "BEIJING: The Chinese Government is to launch a major campaign this year to combat what it sees as a slump in the moral and ethical standards of the country's 1.2 billion citizens. The Chinese President, Mr Jiang Zemin, has staked considerable political capital on the outcome of the "spiritual civilisation" campaign which will be unveiled at the Communist Party's annual conference in September. According to Professor Yan Shuhan, of the party's central school, it has been 10 years since members last adopted a comprehensive ideological code, and it needs updating. "The environment has changed and there is now a greater appreciation of the need to enhance spiritual civilisation," Professor Yan told the *Herald*. "We believe that is the key to the full development of our country." Beijing says this spiritual approach should go hand in hand with progress in material, cultural and economic development. The party leadership is concerned that its ideological agenda has been set back in recent years by the mentality that "to get rich is glorious" which, it says, pervades much of society.

Western diplomats say this poses a threat to the party's grip on power, and that the leadership's solution is to reinforce political education through a concerted campaign of public awareness. According to Professor Yan, fast-paced economic growth has brought a raft of problems including environmental degradation, poor moral standards and wayward attitudes among young people. "In future we will seek a more coordinated development," he said, adding that what was being proposed was not unlike the theory of sustainable development. However, because of the one-party rule in China, it came with a little more ideological flavouring. Professor Ye Qingfeng, of the Central Party School's Politics and Sociology Department, admits the message is harder to sell these days because of past heavy-handed approaches to political campaigns and what he calls the negative effects of the market economy. While the ditching of the planned economy for one that is largely market-driven had brought China many benefits, "it has brought us money worship, hedonism and extreme individualism," Professor Ye said. "All of this makes it more difficult for us." (*SMH*, July 10, 1996).

"We're risen apes, kin to all that lives, even tomatoes" "HUMAN beings were not "fallen angels" but "risen apes", kin to everything that lives, Australia's most controversial anthropologist, Dr Derek Freeman, said last night. Dr Freeman, the emeritus professor of anthropology at ANU [Australia's National University] who in 1983 achieved international fame in debunking Margaret Mead's anthropological theories based on her Samoan research, said it was now "utterly clear" that man was the product of evolution and that this would change all of our long-established assumptions about ourselves. Speaking to the Sydney Institute, Dr Freeman said work on the human genome, and on the genomes of other forms of life, had shown that we were kin to everything that lived. "This radical transformation in human understanding I call the new evolutionary enlightenment and I confidently predict that, because it is based on fully tested scientific knowledge, it will far outshine the enlightenment of the 18th century," he said." (*The Australian*, July 10, 1996).

"\$1.2 trillion loot" "Manila: Organised crime gangs earn \$US1trillion (\$1.2 trillion) a year in profits worldwide and are now so economically powerful they pose a threat to developing countries, a United Nations official told a conference here. Crime profits include \$US1 billion laundered through global financial markets every day, said Mr Eduardo Vetere, head of the UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division."

(*Reuter, SMH, April 12, 1996*).

"The me society" "The United States is in recovery but its sense of community remains badly wounded. Yes, there are more lots of new jobs but the number of working poor is expanding. Self-sufficiency is in, civic concern is down and welfare is in retreat. America has become more selfish, just as Australia and the developed world looks to it for direction. . . American's love of individualism is giving way to an obsession with one's self, with more aggressive self-interest and an exaggerated sense of individual rights, which are shrugging off the traditional restraints of community, church and family. Indeed, if the booming 1980s were labelled the decade of greed, then the 1990s seem to be emerging as a time of more restrained but deliberate selfishness. "A whole range of things, like our high rates of violent crime and litigation, and the fall off in voluntary associations, are symptoms of a lower willingness to abide by the norms and laws of a community." Other sociologists and political scientists are coming to blame turbo-charged individualism for contributing to everything from high crime rates to soaring litigation costs, the world's highest divorce rates, the fact that more than 1 million Americans are in prison and the decline of community groups.

One of the US's most respected sociologists and political scientists, Professor Seymour Martin Lipset, believes the "American creed" has always promoted personal responsibility, initiative, and volunteerism, but that the flip side has been a latent disregard for communal good and "a particularly virulent strain of greedy behaviour". There is "a worldwide trend" towards a greater emphasis on the rights of the individual rather than the community, "but we started out much more in that direction", says Lipset, who has spent four decades studying the US system and comparing it with those of Australia and other nations. Such a narrow concentration on self-interest can be seen as a logical outcome of aggressive capitalism, he says, as can the US's soaring crime rates. "The fact that we put more emphasis on individual success than does any other country means people who don't have the means to succeed are pressed by this culture to succeed by hook or by crook. The pressure to succeed is today being magnified by the extraordinary disparity in US wealth and income, which has prompted a welter of fretful analyses of this new economy - the cover story of this month's issue of the Atlantic Monthly entitled "Reinventing American Capitalism", while Harper's magazine asks: "Does America Still Work?" . . . The richest society ever seen on earth, the US in 1996 has child poverty rates four times those of other developed nations, and its poor and lower-income earners are not just falling further behind other Americans - they are lower paid than their counterparts in less successful developed nations and worse off in absolute terms than they were 20 years ago. . .

INCREASES in the rewards for success and the consequences of failure in the US economy have some economists calling it a "plantation" economy, in which a small elite dominates the benefits of low inflation, record profits and equity growth. Others call it a "superstar" economy, as huge rewards flow to those on top - the most successful athletes, entertainers, executives and professionals earn tens of millions of dollars a year while, in Lipset's words, average real wages are falling and the US "has the highest proportion of people living in poverty among developed nations". Salaries of chief executive officers at US firms rose by 30 per cent last year while average wages went up 2.5 per cent. Adjusting for inflation, the salaries of US chief executive officers have tripled since 1974, while the average worker's pay has fallen 13 per cent. The typical chief executive of a major US firm earns 120 times as much as a typical worker, compared to a ratio of 16 in Japan, 21 in Germany and 33 in the United Kingdom. . . The decline in civic engagement is even more worrying. As long ago as 1831, the perceptive French visitor Alexis de Tocqueville identified this vibrant civic society as one of the most important characteristics of the thriving young US, warning that without the sense of community derived from voluntary associations Americans would be in danger of becoming "self-seekers practising a narrow individualism and caring nothing for the public good". Today's evidence confirms that people who do not belong to community associations are indeed less likely to vote, read newspapers, display any great empathy for their community or donate time to charity. The world's greatest voluntary "joiners", Americans banded together in everything from book clubs to men's lodges, building community networks that provided invaluable support to institutions such as schools. Professor Robert Putnam, the director of the Centre for International Affairs at Harvard University, has documented an alarming fall during the past two decades in the participation rate of Americans in such community organisations. From 1973 to 1993, the number of Americans who said they had attended "a public meeting on town or school affairs" in the previous year fell by more than one-third. "Participation in many types of civic associations, from religious groups to [labour] unions, from women's clubs to fraternal clubs and from neighbourhood gatherings to bowling leagues has fallen off," says Putnam, noting, for instance, that millions of Red Cross and Boy Scout volunteers had gone missing in action. Less than half the proportion of parents who were involved in PTA activities in 1960 bother now to attend such meetings, a particularly worrying trend given that "researchers have discovered that successful schools are distinguished not so much by the content of their curriculum or the quality of their teachers . . . as by the schools' embeddedness in a broader fabric of supportive families and communities". Harvard law professor Mary Ann Glendon agrees with Putnam that more than ever before, the "we" in US society is being replaced by the "me". Glendon believes that much of the withering civic life and signs of isolation and selfishness in modern US society can be traced to a legal and social tendency in recent years to view individual rights as absolute rights, free of social responsibilities and community commitments that were understood by all when the US Constitution was written. "The exaggerated absoluteness of our [modern] American rights rhetoric is closely bound up with its other distinctive traits - a near-silence concerning responsibility and a tendency to envision the rights-bearer as a lone autonomous individual," she says. GLENDON believes Americans express their rights in a way "which captures our devotion to individualism and liberty, but omits our traditions of hospitality and care for the community". According to Putnam, fewer Americans report having any form of social contact with their neighbours, and the drop-off in bowling leagues and similar groups betrays an increasing aloofness and selfinterest, which he blames at least partly on the rise of TV and its dominance of modern Americans' free time. Just as an average of four hours a day in front of the tube has "individualised and privatised" US social life, so the Internet and an increasingly diverse electronic media are likely to further erode the common turf of entertainment and leisure. Putnam says there are signs of a similar "withering of public life" in some other developed nations, and he is chairing an international study group to examine whether there has been a similar drop in "trust and social connectedness" in Australia and seven other nations. The group's first meeting was held in the US this month, but its Australian representative, social commentator Eva Cox, is convinced that similar trends are indeed under way in Australia. "The way American society is fragmenting has very clear implications for Australia because we already have a significant adoption of American culture and we run the risk of the same thing happening here," she says. "The next few years are crucial for Australia... whether we build on what we have in the sense of a collective community or build ourselves into walled communities." The challenge, she says, is to balance individual rights with a renewed commitment to communities. Perhaps then the problem of the less fortunate will be seen as a shared responsibility rather than a blight to be ignored or shuffled from one community to the next." (*The Weekend Australian, May 18-19, 1996*).

"Black or white: poverty is not working" "RACE and culture are less important in determining a child's future than having a parent with a job, according to a 20-year landmark study which forces a major rethink of government support programs. Every child born in the south-west Queensland town of Cunnamulla in 1974 and 1975 was tracked throughout childhood and adolescence during the generational study, believed to be one of the nation's longest investigations. The study gave Aborigines in the town housing, health, educational and financial support to remove the social disadvantages suffered by their parents. But, in alarming findings, it has shown that improvements in antenatal care, nutrition, education and housing paled against the influence of the endemic culture of unemployment in maintaining poverty. The results of the study came as the Minister for Health, Dr Wooldridge, announced yesterday the establishment of a key advisory body on indigenous health to set the priorities for the government in tackling the problem. The study, published in the Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health, shows children with unemployed Caucasian parents and Aboriginal children had higher levels of unemployment and teenage pregnancy than the children of employed Caucasian parents. It was hoped that the 'poverty trap' would not become endemic but rather that the next generation of children would achieve a higher level of financial independence and security. "It would seem that for the past 20 years, government and community intervention programs have failed to achieve their stated objectives." The findings have disappointed the author of the study, paediatrician Dr John Cox, who expected a

dramatic improvement in the next generation. "The net result basically is spending money on health, supportive structure social security and all that to make sure their environment is as healthy as possible is not enough," he said. "There's a massive other factor and that massive factor you get for nothing if the parents are employed. It's obviously an ethos in the family; an expectation of what is normal." (The Weekend Australian, May 18-19, 1996).

"Have we lost the courage to deal with straight talk?" "Edmund Burke observed that politics is but morality writ large; Alexander Yakovlev, at one time Mikhail Gorbachev's closest adviser, bemoaned the fact that Soviet society had yet to "overcome the obstructions of falsehood"; and Australian bishops and businessmen are urging federal politicians to be more truthful. Although, in the wake of the 1993 election, the Australian advice comes ill from either source and John Hewson's fate can but raise doubt about the efficacy of truth, instinctively I know that ministers and aspiring ministers should heed it. The greatest moral casualty of this campaign, however, is not truth, but courage. Truth is at least somewhat protected by an Opposition that is cautious about saying anything that could be misrepresented, and by some regret for the gross misrepresentation of the goods and services tax at the last election. I can't decide whether to be glad or sorry that bishops and businessmen have not yet found the hypocrisy to insist that politicians become braver. The tragedy of Australian politics is that no politician is game to level with us. We ought not to mind a bit of straight talking: it should be apparent that Australia is such a good nation to be born into only because our forebears, in war and peace, sacrificed some of their convenience for future Australians. Will no politician now mention the sacrifices, particularly those that must attend debt reduction, that we ought willingly to accept to ensure that our children also inherit a better Australia? Australian politics was not always so timid. When I was a teenager, with World War II not long past, politics was more civil but very much more ideological. Despite that, politicians of both stamps overtly appealed to our sense of civic responsibility. They demanded limited sacrifices of us for the common long-term good. Those who doubt that this was so might read, say, Menzies' 1954 campaign publicity. Where is the politician in 1996 who will firmly tell us that we must wait for benefits until debt is reduced, in the manner that Menzies told Australians in the 1950s that they must wait until inflation was reduced? Where is the politician who will chide us with the growing evidence that family breakdown and part time parenting are causally linked to juvenile crime, drug addiction and youth homelessness? Instead, they promise as more police! Politicians, who have rightly backed away from legislating for morality, have wrongly become afraid to be seen making the only moral judgments that matter, that is, those that are inconvenient to respect. Thus, creatures of their time, they, like businessmen and bishops, fail to offer worthwhile moral leadership. The ethical vacuum is filled by the trivial and the perverse. I don't know how all this came about. It must, however, be relevant that politically correct intellectuals would have us believe that virtue is no more than cultural preference and that there is no objective way of determining that one culture is superior to another. Both contentions are silly. At least truth, courage and generosity are virtues in any civilised culture. And some cultures are objectively more successful than others, that is, those influenced by them increase in numbers, enjoy greater material well being and live longer.

Will the moral vacuum lead on to the eventual demise of our civilisation as it did, say, the Romans? I can't answer such big questions, but I do know that the amorality that has infected Australian politics is not totally different from the immorality that infected the politics of ancient Rome. We have come a long, downhill moral journey when politicians who lie are discussed not in moral terms but in terms of voter impact; politicians fear to tell voters of unpleasant truths; and when polities debase generosity by claiming credit for dispensing funds that they hold in trust for taxpayers. In fairness, however, it ought to be noted that there is no evidence that they are any less truthful, courageous or generous than their critics. Democratic politicians tend to reflect community standards. Of course, judgmentalism and indignation are rampant, but the basis of publicly expressed judgment has changed or been changed. A public figure may now lie but not assert that a particular race, culture or sex is on average superior and another inferior at making scones or higher mathematics, even if she can produce evidence to support the contention. Discussion of ethics has shifted from the churches to the universities, where there is a plethora of ethics units. The churches once did the job better; the units, by concentrating on ethical dilemmas, miss the problem. In 99 cases in 100, politicians and voters don't need an ethics course. They and we need shaming into doing what we know already to be right. Cicero had this to say about morality in politics: "There is in fact a true law - namely right reason - which is in accordance with nature, applies to all men, and is unchangeable and eternal. By its commands this law summons men to the performance of their duties, by its prohibitions it restrains them from doing wrong. To invalidate this law by human legislation is never morally right, nor is it permissible ever to restrict its operation and to annul it is wholly impossible." Since the law of right reason applies to us all, what then is special about politics? Is it that politicians are in positions of both power and trust? There is something wrong in a society that goes on and on and on about the lies of the novelist Helen Darville (or Demidenko), but virtually excuses those of a minister of the Crown. A community that demands less truth of MPs than novelists must expect indifferent public accountability. Carmen Lawrence is eminently suited to a career in fiction and bishops and businessmen are perhaps wise to exhort politicians to standards they do not themselves maintain" (John Hyde, *The Australian*, Feb. 2, 1996).

Myth of women's oppression "Could it be that feminism was based on a misreading of history? THE moral foundation of feminism is the assertion that women are, and historically have always been, oppressed by men. This telling hypothesis has given women the right to demand social change and to claim special favours for women as a disadvantaged group. But what if the hypothesis of universal oppression of women were, after all, incorrect - a huge mistake? Feminism is a middle-class movement and, looking back from the vantage point of the 1990s, it seems more likely that the real source of "rage" was not a universal injustice inflicted on women, but an effect of the industrial "blip" of two decades of full employment in the 1950s and 60s, which meant that domestic labour became unavailable for middle-class homes. The injustice was a work status inequality within the middle-class household, for while husbands continued to perform "class-appropriate" white-collar work outside the home, their wives found themselves saddled with class inappropriate manual labour within it - cleaning and cooking which had previously been done by domestic help.

It is a well-nigh universal rule that wives are of the same social class as their husbands and perform work of the same status. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, middle-class husbands engaged in white-collar professional and managerial work in business and industry, while their middle-class wives engaged in similarly white-collar professional and managerial work in the domestic household. The work of the middle-class wife was not insubstantial. Until well into this century, the middle-class household was in size not unlike a small business. There was plenty of practical overseeing for a middle-class wife to do, in addition to her important "professional" work of socialising, educating and guiding her children into adult life. In addition, middle-class women kept open the networks of community relationship which make a thriving community, and laid the foundations of what became universal primary education, the social work profession and the welfare State. Although a shortage of domestic labour was experienced during World War I (widely discussed as "the servant problem"), there was no suggestion at that stage that middle-class women should do manual domestic work themselves. During and immediately after World War II, the typical middle-class household had either a young live-in maid or daily older women for specific jobs, such as washing and ironing, mending and cleaning. But by the 1950s, with full industrial employment, domestic help had become virtually unobtainable and the young middle-class wife found herself alone in the kitchen. In the brave, new egalitarian postwar age, it was ideologically unfitting to resent manual work. But work-status inequality in marriage is no triviality, and the major practical and ideological claims of feminism can be seen as efforts to circumvent it - equal employment opportunity, long-day childcare and identity of gender roles in the performance of both housework and the care of children. Husbands, men, unwittingly became the villains of the piece, the oppressors. ALTHOUGH they had not deliberately engineered full industrial employment in order to deprive their wives of domestic help, nevertheless in each wife's personal experience, her husband, in his traditional role as breadwinner, was free to depart to his white-collar job, leaving her holding the baby, in a household which, despite some new labour-saving devices, would not function unless she did the dirty work. The feminist misdiagnosis of the injustice to (middle-class) women resulted in the prescription of a dangerous and inappropriate therapy: the withdrawal of middle-class women from the education, socialisation and supervision of their children - a white-collar occupation which was the core of their earlier role in the home - while they sought alternative white-collar employment in the public workforce. The continuing debate over childcare, three decades on, is witness to the unease which it arouses, despite our best efforts of professionalisation

and quality control. Recent studies have found that 96 per cent of Australians think that mothers of pre-school children should not be in fulltime work and that 40 per cent of parents believe working mothers are "the cause of many problems in society". It has now become clear that women want to nurture and rear their children to an extent which interferes with their whole-hearted participation in the workforce on a par with men. They even, it seems, like running their households and their homes, although not all women want to do the physical work. As a result of feminist-promoted government policies, which make it almost impossible for most families to maintain their material and cultural standards on a single income, women have been in an unmitigated state of conflict and overwork for more than two decades. Despite a return of high unemployment, ideology and family policy place barriers in the way of a solution in terms of paid domestic help. Meanwhile the real and essential public work of middle-class women, originally amateur (in the sense that it was done out of personal commitment), has been professionalised as social work, community services and counselling, but has proved less effective in this form. It is still largely done by women, but can no longer be easily combined with the supervision and nurturing of a maturing family. Our society is experiencing considerable worry over its failures in the acculturation of its children, as seen in youth violence, suicide, drug abuse, homelessness, precocious sexuality and crime. Adolescents with preoccupied mothers are thrown very much on their own meagre resources, and these disturbing signs reflect a lack of socialisation; but above all, they represent the despair of abandonment. It is urgent that a means of returning to women the opportunity of re-engagement with the rearing of their children, not just in early childhood, but through adolescence to their crucial launching into adulthood, should be found. Feminist social theory has, perhaps through a misreading of history, nurtured contempt for the traditional, and perhaps unavoidably differing, tasks of men and women in the raising of children, with the result that they are now performed neither with conviction nor well." *"Dr Lucy Sullivan [the author] is a research fellow with the Centre for Independent Studies. This article is extracted from a new book to be published by the CIS in May". (The Australian, April 17, 1996).*

"Gorilla mum saves tot" "VISITORS at Chicago Zoo looked in horror yesterday as a toddler fell more than four metres into a pit, landing near seven gorillas. But an unlikely hero emerged as spectators called for help, expecting the worst for the three-year-old boy lying battered on the concrete below. A female gorilla, with her own baby clinging to her back, lumbered over to the boy, cradled him in her arms, carried him to a doorway and laid him at the feet of waiting paramedics. Zoo officials said Binti-Jua, a rare western lowland gorilla who had received training on how to be a good mother, appeared to act out of purely maternal compassion for the child. The boy, who had appeared to be unconscious, was alert and crying when the paramedics picked him up. Zoo keepers trained fire hoses on the other gorillas to prevent them approaching Binti and the boy." (*The Sun-Herald* August 18, 1996).

HEALTH

"Tea taken to heart" "Toss out the coffee plunger and top up your tea pot. Mounting evidence suggests that compounds found in tea, especially the green variety, may protect against heart disease and some cancers, while there is strong evidence some coffees can boost cholesterol levels. CSIRO scientists are planning Australia's first major study into the effects of the tea on humans, after recent experiments showed a cup of black or green tea is 15 times better than a glass of orange juice as an anti-oxidant. Anti-oxidants are being studied for their potential in treating or preventing disease because they inhibit oxidation, a chemical reaction caused by molecules called "free radicals", which can damage body cells and DNA. Dr Ian Roberts, a principal research scientist in the CSIRO's division of human nutrition, said a group of anti-oxidants called polyphenols, found teas, red wines and many foods, were proving more potent than anti-oxidants such as vitamin C. We're now realising the anti-oxidant vitamins aren't the be-all and end-all," he said." (*SMH*, August 21, 1996).

"Food warning" "A leading health expert has warned that Australia is under threat from a food poisoning outbreak which has killed eight people and left 8000 children and adults ill in Japan. Dr John Hirshman, of the University of NSW, said international tourism and travel made Australia vulnerable to the spread of the new bacteria." (*The Sun-Herald*, July 28, 1996).

"Cholera epidemic seeps Malaysia" "KUALA LUMPUR: One of the worst cholera epidemics in Malaysia's recent history has prompted Malaysians to ask how the disease could spread so rapidly in a country that prides itself on its rapid modernisation and progress in the field of health and hygiene. In just over a week since Penang declared a "cholera alert", the disease has struck every other State in peninsular Malaysia as well as the federal territory, which includes Kuala Lumpur, the capital. More than 1000 cases have been confirmed and the number continues to rise... People throughout Malaysia have been advised to take precautions against the disease, such as drinking only boiled water and avoiding uncooked food." (*The Australian*, May 21 1996).

"40m have virus" "New Delhi: About 40 million Indians have been infected with the potentially deadly hepatitis-B virus, Dr J.J. Gill, a virus specialist, warned a medical conference in the southern city of Bangalore. India accounts for 10 per cent of the world's hepatitis-B cases, he said." (*SMH*, Oct. 5, 1996).

"Video games 'affect health'" "Tokyo: About 30 per cent of children who play video games develop headaches, eye strain and other health problems during or directly after a game session, a recent study has found. In some cases negative effects were experienced as early as 10 minutes into a game session, said Dr Masahisa Sato, paediatric neurologist at the Niigata Municipal Hospital, and author of the study. Dr Sato surveyed 5,400 junior high school students in second grade in Niigata in 1994. Respondents totalled 4,470 students, assisted by their parents. As many as 95 per cent of the respondents had played video games. Of them 29.7 per cent had experienced some kind of negative effect or a number of health problems." (*SMH*, April 15, 1996).

"Child obesity TV link" "Washington: A majority of cases of childhood obesity can be linked to excessive television viewing after a study released by the American Medical Association found children who spend more than five hours a day watching television are significantly more likely than others to be overweight. Sixty per cent of obesity in children in the study, which examined a national sample of 746 children between the ages of 10 and 15, was linked to extended television viewing." (*The Australian*, April 15, 1996).

"Ban cot blankets, says SIDS expert" "Bed clothes for use in babies' cots, including sheets and blankets, should be banned from sale to help reduce the risk of cot death, according to a leading researcher. Dr Susan Real, a visiting consultant at the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide, said more than 100 babies' lives could be saved each year if Australian parents were more rigorous in implementing measures known to reduce the risk. Dr Beal, who has been researching SIDS for almost 30 years, said bedclothes should never be put over babies in cots, although this is not official policy of SIDS groups. Instead, she advised parents to use sleeping bags, jumpers and other garments which could keep babies warm without slipping to cover their faces. In an editorial in today's *Medical Journal of Australia*, Dr Beal reports that a recent analysis of 84 South Australian cot deaths which had occurred over the last five years suggested at least half might have been prevented. Nineteen of the babies had been found with their faces covered and another 28 had been sleeping on their stomachs - both factors known to increase the risk of SIDS. Extrapolating these figures nationally, this suggested it would be possible to at least halve the current SIDS incidence of one death per 1,000 live births. With about 220 SIDS deaths reported last year, this could translate into more than 100 lives saved, Dr Beal said." (*SMH*, August 19, 1996).

"Asthma risk from mobiles" "Radiation from mobile phones may make asthmatics more susceptible to attacks, research shows. Tests by a researcher at St Vincent's Hospital showed that when cells which produced allergic reactions were subjected to radiation from analogue

mobile phones, they tended to react in a similar way to when they were exposed to pollen. Dr Peter French, the principal scientific officer at the Centre for Immunology at St Vincent's, bathed mast cells (which contain histamines that react when irritated) with the analogue frequency of 835 megahertz. The histamines in the mast cells tended to be more sensitive to an allergic reaction, such as shortness of breath, watery eyes and runny noses. "We found that after exposure to the frequency, the cells exhibited a similar reaction to after exposure to pollen," Dr French said yesterday. "In a sense they are primed for an allergic reaction. We also found that the condition persists after a few days. If you prolong the exposure over about five days, the cells will change permanently." The mast cells were exposed to the mobile phone frequency three times a day for 20 minutes at a time. There was evidence other cells might also be affected, Dr French said. His advice to mobile phone users would be to make sure they did not use their telephones for prolonged periods." (*The Daily Telegraph*, May 1, 1996).

"Phones may radiate brain 'hot spots'" "HEAVY users of mobile phones may be damaging more than just their image. Research reveals that as much as 70 per cent of the microwave radiation they emit is absorbed by the head, prompting fears the phones may be a health risk. The findings come as the European Commission prepares to publish the first recommended "safe" levels for radiation emitted by mobile phones and other telecommunications devices. Nearly all phones on the market exceed these limits. Three unpublished studies by leading academics appear to confirm safety concerns. According to the findings, energy absorbed by the head when using a phone creates "hot spots" in the brain. The first evidence to link mobile phone emissions with health risks is likely to provoke intense debate. While the industry insists that emissions are too low to be hazardous, a new nickel and steel fibre phone cover, which the makers claim blocks up to 90 per cent of emissions, is about to be launched. Mobile phones - both analogue and digital use microwaves of a similar type to ovens, at a different frequency and lower power. Scientists had previously assumed the energy absorbed by the head was evenly distributed, but the latest research suggests the waves can concentrate in "hot spots". An expert in microwave radiation, Dr CameHa Gabriel, who sits on Cenelec - the Brussels body responsible for drawing up new standards - said there was increasing evidence that heavy use was not recommended. She confirmed that Cenelec would be recommending a safe limit later year for emissions of 20 milliwatts compared with the 100-600 milliwatts put out by most mobile phones. Dr Narendra Singh and Dr Henry Lai have worked on another potentially alarming study due for publication shortly. They found at low-level microwave radiation similar to that emitted by mobile phones can split DNA molecules in the brains of live rats. Their conclusions are reinforced by another American study by Dr Ross Adey, a specialist in the biological effects of microwaves. He set out to repeat previous experiments showing that microwaves could accelerate the growth of brain tumours. The results failed to show any conclusive link but highlighted other biological effects." (*The Sunday Times*, *The Australian*, April 15, 1996).

"Live to be 150" "People could be to be 150 if they cut their calorie intake by a third. Tests on insects, rodents and monkeys fed a balanced diet containing less calories had lower body temperatures and slower metabolism. The National Institute of Aging said intake should be reduced from about 3000 to 2100 calories a day to obtain similar results in humans." (*The Daily Telegraph*, May 2, 1996).

"Deadly Organism In British Milk" London: Scientists searching for the cause of a chronic bowel disease affecting more than 10,000 people in Britain have linked the illness to a deadly organism found in cow's milk. Studies have found that the organism, mycobacterium paratuberculosis, exists in cow's and humans. In cattle it causes Johnes disease, an incurable bowel disorder. In humans, scientists now believe it is responsible for many cases of Crohn's disease, a crippling condition which causes the bowel to become swollen, inflamed and ulcerated." (*SMH*, April 22, 1996).

RELIGION

"God's Hidden Message" "Researchers have proof that every word of the Bible has divine inspiration. Israeli researchers using a computer say they have found encoded messages in the Bible, giving new support to the belief that the book's every word is divinely inspired. The researchers say in the Book of Esther they found a reference to the hanging of 10 Nazi war criminals on October 16, 1946, and in the Book of Deuteronomy the word Holocaust was hidden. "There is no way to explain this information," says Dr Moshe Katz, a biomechanic for the Technion company, who has a degree in biblical studies. "This is a divine source." The team has drawn no conclusions but if the initial findings hold up Katz believes the implications could be profound. One of the biggest disputes in the Judeo-Christian tradition has been whether the Bible is literally inspired by God. In Christianity, the question represents a central difference between the theological fundamentalists and the liberals. The team's research suggests the Bible was inspired by God, word for word, letter for letter. Katz says he and Dr Fred Weiner, a computer specialist on the Technion medical faculty, told their computer to skip letters as it scanned the Hebrew language Bible. Often words and messages leaped out of the text when the computer used only every 50th letter or 26th letter. One of the Hebrew names for God is Yahweh. When its Hebrew letters are translated into numbers, Yahweh becomes 26. Fifty, Katz points out, is seven times seven plus one. Seven is an important number in the Bible - there are seven days in the week of Creation.

It is 50 days between Passover and Shavuot (the Christian holiday Pentecost). Farmers were told to work the land 49 years and rest it on the 50th year. Katz says by skipping letters at intervals of 26 they found Elohim, another Hebrew name for God, hidden 147 times among the letters of the Book of Genesis. He said the probability of it happening by chance was about one-in-two-million. Computer programmer Dr Eliyahu Rips, a Hebrew University mathematician, found the name of Aaron the high priest hidden among the letters in the first part of Leviticus 25 times. He says the probability of that happening is one-in-500,000.

Esther 9 is the story of how Queen Esther demanded the hanging of the 10 sons of Haman who were enemies of the Jews. Hidden among the names of the sons were letters of the Hebrew date for 1946 - the year the Nazis were hanged. According to newspaper reports at the time, Julius Streicher, one of the Nazis, shouted just before his hanging, "Today is Purim 1946." Purim is the Jewish holiday celebrating Esther's triumph. The date of the hanging of the Nazis, October 16, 1946, fell on the final day of judgment in the 10 Days of Awe between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. In Deuteronomy 31, the Lord told Moses his descendants would forsake God and break his law. Verse 17 says, "Then my anger will be kindled against them ... and I will devour them." When the computer read every 50th letter in that section, the Hebrew word for Holocaust emerged. Many biblical scholars today believe the Bible was pieced together by a skilled editor using four ancient sources - the D, P, E and J documents. "There is no way that this documentary hypothesis can stand," Katz says, pointing out that of the encoded words were drawn from passages that proponents of this hypothesis say were pieced together from more than one source."

"A Faith To Suit" "Between 1987 and 1991, the number of Buddhists in Australia grew by a phenomenal 67 per cent, taking numbers to more than 150,000. An even bigger growth is expected to be recorded in the next Census... Buddhism is drawing on highly educated, often artistic, Sydneysiders looking for a spiritual alternative. . . Most Westerners are attracted to the Mahayanan tradition, which originated in northern Asia in the region bound by Tibet, Nepal, India and Mongolia, rather than the Theravadan, a more ritualistic and monastic-based form of Buddhism traditionally found in the countries of South-East Asia. The Theravadans are rigid in their application of rules whereas Mahayanan tend to be more flexible about their moral code, which also may explain its appeal to Westerners. The Tibetan tradition tends to be more accessible, says an Australian-born monk, Steve, who converted 13 years ago to the more disciplined Theravadan tradition. "A lot of Westerners become Buddhists as a reaction to their Christian background," he says. "They will tell you that [Buddhism] doesn't have a strong moral code whereas it does, but where it is different is that it doesn't have a concept of sin in the Christian tradition, but has the concept of Karma". . . Or as Graham Lyal, the head of the Buddhist Council of NSW, the umbrella organisation for all Buddhists in NSW, puts it: "Buddhism is more a way of life rather than a preparation for another life." (*SMH Metro*, July 7, 1995).

"Hell of a queue" "Bogota: Thousands of devout Catholics are rushing to baptise their children at churches throughout Colombia's capital after a rumour foretold the arrival of the Antichrist, a local TV program has reported. Churches baptised more than 7,000 children in less than six hours over the weekend, it said." (*Reuter, SMH, June 4, 1996*).

"Theologian allows Pill for nuns at risk of rape" "Rome: Nuns working in dangerous areas and mentally handicapped women may be given the contraceptive pill if they are at serious risk of rape, according to a leading Vatican theologian. Father Gonzalo Miranda, who lectures at the Pontifical Academy of the Regina Apostolorum and is Secretary of the Institute of Bioethics at Rome's Catholic University, said the Pill was sanctioned in such cases if the women ran "a serious and imminent risk of rape". In an interview published by the Italian Bishops' Conference official news agency, which lends his views extra weight, Father Miranda said: "Contraception is morally illicit when it accompanies a desired sexual act, but when a sexual act is imposed, and not wanted, then contraception represents the only form of protection. "In such cases the act of taking the Pill ... is not a true act of contraception from the moral point of view, but only an act of defence." (*SMH, April 27, 1996*).

"Young love: it's a crime" "New York: A Small town in Idaho is using a 75-year-old law against fornication to prosecute children who have underage sex. At least three cases of criminal fornication, concerning a boy of 13 and a 15-year-old pregnant girl with her boyfriend, have been heard so far in the Gem County magistrate's court at Emmett, a deeply conservative township north-west of Boise. The offenders were given suspended 30-day terms in jail. The court would not say yesterday how many cases have been heard since the county prosecutor. Mr Douglas Varie, started a campaign against underage pregnancies in Emmett earlier this year. One source said there had been a "mini-boom" in rotund teenage girls in court. The children were charged under a 1921 Idaho law which states that "any unmarried person who shall have sex with an unmarried person of the opposite sex shall be found guilty". No age limit is stipulated, but so far - to the relief of adults - Mr Varie has used the law only against minors. The 15-year-old girl, Amanda Smisek, was charged only after she approached the State for social security help with her pregnancy. Shortly thereafter she was charged with criminal behaviour. Her boyfriend, Chris Lay, pleaded guilty but she said she was innocent. After losing her case before Judge Gordon Petrie she said it was "not fair" she now had a criminal record. Mr Varie, 32, was away yesterday, and left instructions that his deputy should not talk to the press. However, he told the Wall Street Journal that he considered the law a good tool for preventing criminal behaviour among youngsters. He reportedly called Miss Smisek "a disgruntled, irresponsible teenager who brings something into the world that is going to cost taxpayers a lot of money". (*The Australian, July 10, 1996*).

"Aids help weary Pope with cross" "ROME: A tired-looking Pope John Paul presided on Good Friday at a solemn "Way of the Cross" procession around Rome's an Colosseum, leading the world's 960 million Roman Catholics in commemorations of Christ's crucifixion. The 75-year-old Pope led the traditional ceremony around the candle-lit amphitheatre where early Christians were martyred. However, for the second year running, he walked slowly carried the cross for only the first part of the procession. The Pope, who still limps noticeably from a leg operation two years ago, was helped the rest of the procession by a nun from Sarajevo, a woman from Bosnia, a mother from Rwanda and several Italians. Each carried the two-metre-high cross for parts of the of the procession. The Vatican says the Pope has no serious health problems and last month angrily denied a Spanish newspaper report that he has cancer. He had surgery to remove an intestinal tumour in 1992. ...During the afternoon he presided at a Good Friday service in St Peter's Basilica where he heard the faithful pray for his good health. "Let us pray for our Holy Father, Pope John Paul, that God who chose him to be bishop may give him health and strength to guide and govern God's holy body" a prayer read in English during the service said. Prayers for the Pope have been read before at Vatican services but this one was more poignant following last month's illness. Holy Week ceremonies culminate today, Easter Sunday, when the Pope is due to say Mass in St Peter's Square and then deliver his twice-yearly "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) blessing and message. The Pope was taken ill and had to cut short his last Urbi et Orbi message on Christmas Day. In Jerusalem thousands of Christian pilgrims from around the world gathered on Good Friday to retrace Jesus' last steps to his crucifixion, despite fresh threats of suicide bombings. Carrying wooden crosses and chanting hymns, the pilgrims trudged along the cobblestones of the Via Dolorosa (Way of Sorrows) to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which occupies the site where many Christians believe Jesus was buried and resurrected." (*The Sun-Herald, April 7, 1996*).

"Vatican educator questions teaching" "THE Vatican's papal education adviser has questioned the use of a popular teaching theory adopted in many Catholic and government schools, claiming it is undermining the work of the church. Cardinal Pio Laghi, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome, said the child-centred approach to learning threatened the effectiveness of faith education programs in Catholic schools. In a keynote address to the National Catholic Education Commission's 1996 conference in Canberra yesterday, Cardinal Laghi said new trends in educational theory had some positive aspects - notably the rejection of rote learning in the accumulation of knowledge. However, he feared the method worked against the teaching of the church's values because it focused too much on the individual child. "A lot of schools use it but this assumption that early education need not be kind to specific content ... is not enough. Children will certainly instinctively learn about faith and values from inside but they also need help to develop these things." Because it encouraged children to "grow up on their own", the "nature and even the very existence of the Christian message is being questioned". Cardinal Laghi said advocates of the child-centred approach often believed doctrines of faith could be discovered and proved by unaided reason. As a result, many were deprived of getting a religious education based on a "clearly and confidently articulated doctrine of content". (*The Australian, May 3, 1996*).

"Catholic wealth must go: academic" "THE Catholic Church would have to consider divesting itself of its wealth and power and become "poor, inclusive and non-dominating" if it wanted to continue espousing core gospel values into the next century, a leading Catholic scholar claimed yesterday. Associate Professor Marie Joyce, of the Australian Catholic University, said the church could no longer ignore the fact that "there is a direct contradiction between what is said and what is done". She said the church should practise what it preached by "leading the way in counter cultural values, leading the way in the dispossession of material wealth, of power, especially structural power". In a keynote address to the National Catholic Education Commission's 1996 conference in Canberra, Professor Joyce - a senior lecturer in psychology and a practising Catholic - said an "insidious and very destructive" culture of fear had pervaded the church to such an extent that the hierarchy were often afraid to speak out on controversial issues. "Christ's commitment to the poor is honoured but actions show that the public church wants to protect its property, its position of power in the world, and the Vatican, its Statehood," she said. "Within the church there is a culture of fear about speaking out, arising from the punitive experiences of those who have spoken out and suffered. "In most recent times, we have experienced directions not to discuss certain issues. What are adult human beings to make of that in an institution that claims to value freedom of speech?" However, she said educators had a crucial role to play in "aiding the stumbling church" by facing and addressing this "crisis of authenticity". "Unless the crisis of authenticity is addressed, we will continue, to lose the younger generations," she said. Professor Joyce said Catholic schools and universities could help overcome the culture of fear by encouraging open discussion about controversial issues among its students and staff. "If the church of the future is to flourish, it will need to learn to dialogue healthily within," she said. She received rousing applause from the 500 conference delegates. Pope John Paul II's education adviser, Cardinal Pio Laghi, will address the conference today. Professor Joyce told the conference that the turmoil being experienced within the church over the issue of sexual abuse by clergy had contributed to the climate of fear. "Disbelief and a wish to cover up the evil have meant that in the past honesty and integrity have been sacrificed, and hypocrisy and self serving actions have been obvious." Elaborating on her comments later Professor Joyce said they were a "call back to the real gospel values". "I threw it out as a challenge and they (the church) may not obviously agree," she said. "Visiting the Vatican and seeing the great wealth there and the lootings of war, I tried to understand how this could be the church of Jesus that I had read about in the gospel." (*The Australian, May 2, 1996*).

"Down side of celibacy" "As a student of the Bible, I believe that paedophilia within the Roman Catholic church (S-H 21/4), has been a direct result of the doctrine of celibacy. A priest is cast out of he marries but if he is a paedophile he is often just given counselling at some retreat. Paul the Apostle warned against celibacy when he wrote: "Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from

the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, devils. Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from meats..." 1 Timothy 4:1-3. If a man decides before God not to marry so that he might give his time to serving the Lord, that's good, but when it is taught as a doctrine that must be obeyed, then that's against God, who ordained marriage. Even Martin Luther (1483-1546) realised that truth." (*The Sun-Herald*, April 28, 1996).

"Changing the shape of priesthood" "We do not just want to ordain women, we want to change the shape of the priesthood." (A prominent Catholic nun. ABC TV, Compass, Sept. 8, 1996).

"Cardinal raises prospect of marriage" "The man widely tipped as the next Pope, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, says there is "no theoretical problem" preventing sexually-active married men from becoming Roman Catholic clergy. On a visit to Sydney, Cardinal Martini, the Archbishop of Milan, told the *Herald* yesterday that "celibacy is not necessarily linked to the priesthood", and the Church could "make some changes, some adaptations" to its present approach. The Cardinal's remarks will renew debate among Catholics over whether reversing the Vatican's opposition to priests being married would ease the clerical shortage. Father Bill Uren, the Australian provincial of the Cardinal's religious order, the Jesuits, said he believed celibacy would eventually become optional, with diocesan priests being allowed to marry. The move to end compulsory celibacy has over the past year been supported by the Bishop of Rockhampton, Brian Heenan, and a prominent Irish bishop, Brendan Comiskey of Ferns, who has been ordered by the Vatican to retract his statements. Pope John Paul II is strongly opposed to abandoning the requirement for celibacy, but the next Pope - Cardinal Martini is one of two favourites - could move to relax the rule. Celibacy is not considered an infallible doctrine and has only been the norm in the Church since the Middle Ages. Cardinal Martini, who leaves Australia today after a 10-day visit, said the Church had opened its doors to several married former Anglican priests and non-celibate clergy from the Maronite, Malkite and Ukrainian Catholic churches. Although it was "possible" that married and non-married priests could one day work together, celibacy "should never be abolished or forgotten because it responds to a call of Jesus", he said. Cardinal Martini addressed more than 300 people yesterday, including several of the city's corporate leaders, about business ethics. He then visited the tomb of the Blessed Mary MacKillop, where he said the primary role of women in the Church was to uphold the "sanctity of life". The *European* newspaper last year named Cardinal Martini favourite for the papacy, at 6-4, followed by Cardinal Achille Silvestrini from Emilia-Romagna at 3-1. Cardinal Francis Arinze, of Nigeria, was listed as a 7-1 shot. Since then, Vatican watchers have shifted away from Cardinal Arinze, who visited Australia last year and who could become the first black Pope, to an Italian pontiff or, possibly, Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Belgium. At 69, Cardinal Martini's age may count against him. But he said speculation about his election "doesn't touch me ... because first of all the present Pope has good health and goodwill to go into the year 2000." (*SMH*, Aug. 7, 1996),

I HAVE much sympathy with Father M. Shadbolt (*The Clergy Always The Clergy*, Letters, 21/4), but I acknowledge that those who put themselves up as moral guardians have to put up with flak when they are seen to be as human as the rest of us. The Catholic Church received me as one of its own more than 56 years ago, and I have had reasonably intimate contact with nuns, brothers and priests (but, alas, not bishops) ever since. I don't think it will surprise anybody to hear that the vast majority are decent people, and many of them leave me in awe at the love they showed their fellow human beings - a brother who devotes his life to victims of AIDS, a nun who cleans public lavatories so as to relieve her order of the burden of supporting her, priests who spend six nights a week visiting the squats in town to bring coffee and human contact. Please do not condemn the majority for the sins of the few. But if you want to condemn those bishops and other leaders who used their power to move the problem somewhere, to cover up and obfuscate, I find it hard to defend them. It is their actions that have caused the media to home in on Catholic sexual abuse even though the number of cases involving brothers and priests is proportionately less than those involving health professionals, psychotherapists and others with power over women and children. Wake up, Your Graces, who were among that lot! As well as compounding the suffering of the innocent, you have failed to support the vast majority of decent people (clergy and lay) who put into practice what you presume to preach." (Letters, *The Australian*, May 3, 1996)

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that' ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called into his marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

"Archbishop must quit: abuse victim" "A VICTIM of sexual abuse in a Catholic primary school yesterday called for the resignation of Melbourne's Catholic Archbishop designate, Dr Georg Pell, because of his association with a paedophile priest in 1973. The call came as the victim's former principal at Ballarat's St Alipius primary school Christian Brother Robert Charles Best, was given a nine-month suspend jail sentence by the Victorian County Court for unlawfully and indecently assaulting an 11-year-old student 1969. The Best sentence accompanied the lifting of a suppression on the trial of another Christian Brother, Edward Vernon Dowlan, who taught at the same school. Dowlan was jailed for nine years and eight months earlier this month after pleading guilty to 16 counts of indecent assault on 11 boys at Christian Brothers colleges between 1971 and 1982. He will serve a minimum of six years jail. The two sentences complete a dark history for the St Alipius boys. At the same time that Best and Dowlan were teachers, the local parish priest was Gerald Francis Ridsdale, one of Victoria's most notorious paedophiles. Ridsdale was jailed in 1994 for 18 years after pleading guilty to 46 charges against 21 children. Mr Stephen Woods, molested by Dowlan in 1973 and two years later by Ridsdale, said Dr Pell who in 1973 shared the presbytery with Ridsdale, either knew or should have known about Ridsdale's attacks on students but took no action to prevent it. Mr Woods said a royal commission was needed to uncover the full extent of paedophiles in the Church. "I would question Pell's ability to hold the office of Archbishop with fairness and strength," he said. Speaking to *The Australian* yesterday as Best awaited his sentence, Dr Pell denied any knowledge of the paedophile ring: "I was a junior curate. I was wetter behind the ears then than I am now. You didn't suspect people of those things then." Dr Pell described paedophilia as a gross violation of people's rights: "It has almost an element of sacrilege because priests are sacred persons and it's a violation of every principle of trust. "There are too many examples of this weakness, but the overwhelming majority of priests and religious and lay people who practise their religion are good people." Sentencing Best, 55, Judge Michael McInerney said the assaults were bizarre and repulsive and breached the trust of the boys' parents and the community. Judge McInerney said: "What has to be emphasised in cases such as this is that adults who sexually abuse children can expect to receive sentences that reflect the community's abhorrence of such behaviour." (*The Australian*, July 25, 1996).

"Sex abuse: Brothers to pay \$3.5m" "In one of the biggest class actions in Australia's legal history, the Christian Brothers have agreed to pay \$3.5 million to 210 men who allege the Brothers physically and sexually abused them as children. Under a nationwide deal just reached to settle the class action, each of the 210 claimants will receive a flat \$2,000 payment from the Catholic Church, but those who can prove they were abused will be eligible for further compensation of between \$10,000 and \$25,000, depending on the level of abuse. . . The man representing the victims in States outside Western Australia, Mr John Hennessey, said the final package was "a national disgrace" but one which the men felt they had to accept or receive nothing at all. "This has been the greatest trauma of our lives," said Mr Hennessey. All claimants are veterans of Christian Brothers' institutions in Western Australia, where 4,000 child migrants, orphans and State wards were sent between 1901 and 1983. Most came from Britain, Ireland and Malta." (*SMH*, July 30, 1996)

"Society hypocritical about child abuse, says cardinal" "Child abuse by the clergy is linked to the wider issue of sexual permissiveness in society, says Cardinal Carlo Martini, the Archbishop of Milan, the man sometimes touted as the next Pope. Sexual abuse by priests was a warning to society that it could not be permissive about sexual conduct, he said in Melbourne yesterday. "I find a certain hypocrisy in a society which is so permissive in everything which is sexual conduct, and does not see the connection between permissiveness and these cases [of child abuse]," Cardinal .Martini said. "If we admit everything about pornography, permissiveness in every kind, we will have some better results. "I

think this is a sign for society to be more severe and to understand that sexual life has some rules for everybody." Cardinal Martini, 69, who has been at the centre of media speculation as a possible successor to the ailing Pope John Paul II, has just started a 10-day Australian visit." (SMH, July 30, 1996).

"Challenge the myth, change the world, Reverend is one of a kind" "Asked to categorise herself as a Christian, the Reverend Mara Di Francesco says she's a charismatic Anglo-Catholic, fundamentalist, evangelical, liberal, feminist Italian. "In other words, I'm a mixture of a lot of things," the Rev Mara said. "I don't like to be put into a box." And there certainly wouldn't be a pre-fab box to take her - the Rev Mara is most definitely one of a kind. Tomorrow night the vibrant South Coast deacon will become the first woman born of Italian parents to be elevated to the priesthood in the Anglican Church in Australia; the first woman to be ordained in Batemans Bay; and the youngest woman to be ordained in the Diocese. The historic event will fulfil what must have seemed at times an impossible dream. "I felt called at the age of six and at the time I was a Roman Catholic," she said. "It was very clear, I understood it, but I didn't tell anyone because I didn't think they would believe a child. "I thought, no God, only boys can do that, not a girl." But the Rev Mara broke the mould - and in many ways. Despite her Catholic upbringing and cultural background, she felt prompted to act on her initial calling and joined the Anglican Church in 1988." (*Illawarra Mercury*, Aug. 5, 1996).

"Missal Of Massacre And Myth" "THE very best that parents can do for their children in these troubled days, says the Very Rev Dean Lance Shilton, the Anglican Dean of Sydney, is to read a modern translation of the Bible and send the children to Sunday School (21/10). But what can parents and children find in any translation of the Bible? Nothing but never-ending God ordained killings, rape and pillage, divine acts of gross injustice and inconsistency, barbarous laws, unfulfilled prophecies and threats, contradictions, absurdities, atrocities, stupid and conflicting repetitions of the same stories and, in footnotes, shameless admissions of the translation. The Bible has brought nothing but death and disaster to the world. This monstrous missal of massacre, myth, mystery and muddle, must be Kept out of the schools."

(Alan F. Parkinson, *The Weekend Australian*, 26-27 October, 1985).

"Charles church doubt" "London: Prince Charles has long lost interest in the Church of England even though he will become its head when he becomes king, former archbishop of Canterbury Lord Runcie believes. . . . The prince's interest in "new age" philosophy is also said to concern the church. . . . A biography of Lord Runcie by Humphrey Carpenter also reveals that the man who married the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1981 has admitted he considered the couple ill-matched and knew the marriage had been arranged simply to produce an heir to the throne. . . . Extracts from the book have already caused a stir with the gay community because Lord Runcie admits he feared being stabbed in the back by homosexual clergy because he was heterosexual" (*The Daily Telegraph*, Sept. 9, 1996).

"Everything is God-ordained" "In my letter, Missal Of Massacre And Myth (26/10), I said that the Bible reeks with "God-ordained killings, rape, and pillage." Arthur Negus (5/11) now offers to give to the Matt Talbot Hostel \$50 for every instance of God-ordained rape I can find in the Bible. If we believe the Bible, everything is God-ordained. "All things are decided by fate. It was known long ago what each man would be. So there is no use arguing with God about your destiny" (Ecclesiastes 6: 10, Living Bible). So, every case of rape is God-ordained. Like the Mexican earthquake. Like AIDS. But more specifically. The Bible alleges that God told Moses to slaughter the Midianites. After the battle, Moses screamed at his soldiers: "Kill every male among the little ones. And kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women, children that hath not known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves!" (Numbers 31) The soldiers of the Lord got 16,000 of these unfortunate girls, less 32 for the priests, and the "congregation" got another 16,000." (Alan F. Parkinson, *The Australian*, November 11, 1985).

"Church must fight menace within: report" "Internal divisions, falling attendance and the ageing of its traditional community are contributing to the decline of the Anglican Church, once the nation's biggest single denomination, a new report says. Despite attempts to broaden its appeal, it says the Church no longer reflects Australia's cultural identity, continuing to be seen as the faith of the British, the ruling class and the privileged. The report, commissioned by the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, was prepared by a Sydney social researcher, Ms Tricia Blombery. It cites research by the National Church Life Survey showing that 3.8 per cent of Anglicans left the denomination for other faiths in the five years to 1991, often going to the Pentecostal churches. "Although a loss of 3.8 per cent of the attending membership over five years may in itself not appear too desperate, continuation of the current trend in the long-term will have a serious impact on Anglican attendance," says the report, to be released today. Up to World War II, about 40 per cent of Australians were Anglican, but in the 1991 census, they only made up about 24 per cent of the population, second to the Catholics. One in five attending Anglicans hold university degrees, while only 28 per cent of active Anglicans were under 40 years old, compared with 51 per cent of the general adult population." (*SMH*, Aug.5, 1996).

"Scientology sect gets a bollocking" "The Church of Scientology, the bizarre cult founded by the late Lafayette Ron Hubbard, is reeling from setbacks in the US and Germany. In New York, Federal District Judge Peter K Leisure has dismissed a \$450 million libel suit brought by the Scientologists against *Time* magazine and Time Warner Inc over a 1991 cover story entitled *Scientology: The Cult of Greed*. It described the sect as a "a hugely profitable global racket that survives by intimidating members and critics in a Mafia-like manner". Richard Behar, who wrote the article and now works for Time Inc's *Fortune* magazine, said: "It's a tremendous defeat for Scientology, but of course their doctrine states that the purpose of a suit is to harass, not to win, so from that perspective they hurt us all. They've had a real chilling effect on journalism, both before and after my piece." In a pending action, Behar has accused the church of harassment and improperly obtaining his credit reports. Time Warner Inc reportedly spent more than \$8 million defending *Time* against Scientology-related litigation. In a statement, the Church said it would appeal against the court's decision. Meanwhile, the youth wing of Germany's ruling Christian Democratic Union is campaigning against Scientologists, accusing them of using criminal means for unconstitutional and totalitarian ends, and wanting their religious status ended. The CDU's youth movement has called for a nationwide boycott of Tom Cruise's latest film, *Mission Impossible*, because he is a Scientologist. And the Bavarian regional government has decided that all candidates for a civil service post would have to declare they were not a member of the Church of Scientology. In reply, the church said that in the face of this arrogance, Germany needed to be reminded that this is 1996 and not 1936."

(*The Sun-Herald*, August 18, 1996)

"Sexuality report threatens church unity" "A CONTROVERSIAL Uniting Church report recommending that openly homosexual clergy, same-sex marriages and sex outside of wedlock be adopted as policy would signify the "end of the church as we know it", conservatives warned yesterday. The national spokesperson for the Evangelical Members group within the Uniting Church, Reverend Robert Iles, claimed that the report was the "most significant" attack on the unity of the church in 20 years. The Interim Report on Sexuality, released on Thursday, was produced after a 12-month consultation period by a 12-member taskforce set up by the church's decision-making body, the Uniting Church Assembly. Designed to be the basis of a report to the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Perth in July 1997, the authors argue that the church is often silent or negative about sexuality, that "living in sin" was an alienating phrase, homosexual relationships would be recognised and affirmed in church services and divorce was sometimes "the only creative and life-giving direction". (*The Weekend Australian*, May 18-19, 1996).

"Homosexuality and the church: Heresy charge lost in gay ordination case" "Wilmington, Delaware. It's official: the 72-year-old retired bishop with white hair and a hearing aid attached to his spectacles is not a heretic. After two lengthy hearings and almost three months of deliberations, an Episcopal Church court yesterday dismissed two charges against retired bishop Walter Righter, averting the possibility of a heresy trial but publicly revealing a split in the Church on the position of homosexuals. In a decision certain to have ramifications for other Protestant denominations throughout the world, including the Anglican Church of Australia, the court ruled that neither the doctrine nor the discipline of the Episcopal Church prohibited the ordination of a noncelibate homosexual living in a committed relationship. The court ruled that there was no such doctrine. Thus Bishop Righter could not be held to have acted in defiance of an established Church position. Bishop Righter afterwards said he felt both relief and gratitude at the decision, ending what he described as "a very invasive procedure". Nor did he seem upset by the dissenting judgment, saying there was room in the Church for all points of view. . . Bishop Fairfield argued homosexuality was outside the biblical

norm, and there was thus a scriptural basis for the proscription of the ordination of an actively homosexual person. . . . But Mr Stopfel - who is now a priest in New Jersey and attended the session with his partner, Will Leckie - said he had found it difficult to listen to Bishop Fairfield. "It felt like gay-bashing. To hear it couched in theology was particularly hurtful for me as a member of the Church." Mr Stopfel said the judgment had implications beyond the US that would "reverberate throughout the Anglican community". (*SMH*, May 17, 1996).

"There is no freedom in homosexuality. It's like having your soul in chains." (U Turn Anglia, *SBS TV*, Sept., 1996).

"Bible basher attacks gays on the Web" by Ann Lamoy in Kansas City "Old-fashioned Bible thumping hit cyberspace last week when the Reverend Fred Phelps' Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka in the United States went online. The church has established a Web page, with the help of Kansas State University. Mr Phelps, nationally known for picketing outside the funerals of gay men and protesting at homosexual-rights parades, launched his cyberspace crusade on June 23. His grandson, Mr Ben Phelps, persuaded the minister to advertise the address of his personal home page in a weekly radio broadcast. Mr Phelps senior said he did not understand the jumble of letters and symbols, but he read it anyway. That address took computer users to a Web page created by the younger Phelps, a senior enrolled in a summer course at the university. The Web page describes homosexuals as depraved and it includes Bible verses and placard slogans. Both Phelpses said they were surprised by the attention generated by the page, which had been visited by more than 10,000 people by last week. "It's awesome," said Mr Fred Phelps, who hasn't seen the page. "I've got to believe we're going to get more (attention) worldwide." An economics professor at Kansas City's Rockhurst College, Mr Geoff Segebarth, said he was horrified when he visited the page last week. "It's just awful to have on there," the openly gay academic said. "It's now been sanctioned by K-State." On the contrary, said Ms Cheryl May, director of news services for the university. University officials do not sanction any Web pages developed by students, she said. "Although the university finds it repugnant and disagrees with it, the student has the right to freedom of speech," Ms May said. Ultimately, she added, administrators realised they could not kill the Phelps page without killing the home pages of every other student. "We don't want to take benefits from 20,000 students when we don't like what one student is doing," she said." (*New York Times*, *The Australian*, July 8, 1996).

"Bible bashing: Islamic evangelist's Easter show of defiance" "SHEIKH Ahmed Deedat takes the stage at the Sydney Town Hall tomorrow night, on the most solemn day of the Christian calendar, to deliver a message many churchgoers will regard as an affront, given at a time deliberately calculated to provoke them. Deedat is a South African Muslim missionary who is determined to fulfil an evangelistic role among the Australian people. He dismisses objections to the timing of his lecture, titled *Easter: A Muslim Viewpoint*. Deedat regards the Crucifixion of Jesus as "crucifixion" and says that Islam, which rejects the death and resurrection of Jesus, is "a necessary corrective to the Bible". Dr Gordon Moyes, head of Sydney's Wesley Central Mission, is scandalised and asks how Muslims would react if Christian activists targeted the beginning of Ramadan, the Muslim fast, with a critical gathering or an evangelistic talkfest. "Why shouldn't we enjoy Good Friday?" says Deedat. "The mosques are filled on that day because it is a public holiday and everyone can go." "We Muslims put Jesus up as one of the very great prophets and we accept his miraculous birth. But these days Christians are denying that birth and even the divinity of Jesus, which they used to claim. "It is we Muslims who honour his mother, so when Salman Rushdie, in his *Satanic Verses*, insulted the wives of the prophet Mohammed - blessed be his name - it was like insulting our own mothers. They are mothers to us." Invited to lecture here by the Centre for Islamic Dakwah and Education, the sheikh says he appreciates the freedom Muslims have to worship here. Many Australian Muslims have been in the forefront of calls for racial vilification legislation. That they have some justification is evident from the contemptuous way veiled Muslim women are treated in our streets and the often prejudiced opposition of councils to the building of mosques. Still, the sheikh does not shrink from criticism of other people's faith. "We Muslims do not go from door to door peddling our religion, whereas Christians of different denominations encroach upon our privacy and peace, and take advantage of our hospitality to harass the unwary Muslim," he says. "The lectures I hold are to sound out these shrinking missionaries who 'attack' the home and hearth of the unsuspecting Muslim who goes about minding his own business." But these "Christians" turn out to be Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, whose missionary operations are part of a daily campaign. Their intention, to correct mainstream Christians, is the cause of as much irritation to other Christians as it is to Muslims." (*The Australian*, April 4, 1996).

"My family 's veil of tears" "My father walks through the door. My mother, sister and I run, hide, pretend we're cleaning or sleeping. He's so big and so scary. His full grizzly beard, the spot of baldness on his head, a perfect fit for his self-acquired crown. His huge, fierce brown eyes always bloodshot, a temper equivalent to a wild dog. He hides his identity as a businessman in the community. Under the social mask lies an authoritative, strict and narrow-minded man. It's his way or no way, and everything according to him is for the sake of Islam. His violence and barbaric control of his daughters and wife are justified in the name of Allah by the Arabs in the community who admire him. They have turned a blind eye to our black eyes. My mother is in the kitchen, preparing the meals, ironing the clothes, doing the dishes for my father and my brothers. Under the traditional Islamic veil, which covers her from head to toe, her skin is as white as ice, her body craves to see the sun. Her legs, webbed with varicose veins, mark the scars from the tiredness of her life. Her heart aches from depression, her eyes are swollen from sadness. She runs the household and is always there for her family. She is a woman with a voice that is never heard and who has learnt to deal with her life. Who am I? A woman with a voice who is never heard, but who will not accept this sort of life. Being the eldest of eight children, a great deal of responsibility was placed upon me. Being a girl, I also had to maintain my family's reputation. I had to listen, obey and never question. I had to wear the Islamic veil, not for the sake of Islam, but because of what people would say. My father's greatest fear was that his daughters might elope with a non-Muslim man. How could he explain his kingdom to people he had no control over? I allowed my father's religion and culture to control me because I knew the consequences of disgracing the family honour: death. And if murder is committed, a cultural plan goes into action, so the perpetrator is helped to escape to his country of origin. I could not fight the king but silence became my power. Unfortunately, still, he does not know who I am, but what he thinks I am. All bow. The king has a successor: my chosen husband. At 16, I agreed with my father that marriage was the answer. I thought it was the perfect escape from my prison home. My husband has the smile of a prince but his big white teeth conceal the blackness within. He was the man who would take my problems away. He was the man who would give me unconditional love and care, the things I craved. His hands were the first to caress me sexually, the first to caress me violently. His temper was volcanic, erupting at any time, and his words lashed at my soul. He became the man who wounded my body, my heart, my brain. He used my weakness against my father as his power to manipulate and blackmail me into submission. I further tolerated the abuse because of the genuine fear of being murdered and having my children kidnapped and taken to a country where I would receive no access, a country where women have no rights. Violence and control are such a vicious cycle and I was trapped once again. Today, in my country, Australia, I stand before my Judge, to judge." (*SMH*, July 17, 1996).

"Middle East - Kuwaiti Christian convert's 'death sentence'" "A Kuwaiti convert to Christianity declared an apostate by an Islamic court has said the ruling is in effect a death sentence and that he fears for his life. Mr Robert Hussein, 45, a businessman, said: "Everyone is asking for my death. A man has a right to live. Everyone has accused me of apostasy. This is a matter of life or death ... They sentenced me to death on May 29." That day the Shi'ite Family Court, ruling on a private civil suit brought against Mr Hussein by three Islamic lawyers, declared him an apostate, in the first such finding by a court in the conservative Gulf Arab State. The court imposed no penalty but ordered Mr Hussein to pay the costs of the case. Mr Hussein, a thin figure in Western clothes who lives in hiding after receiving death threats, said he would appeal against the ruling at a Court of Appeal hearing set for September 15. He intended also to launch a parallel appeal against the ruling in the Constitutional Court some time in September on the grounds that the Constitution guaranteed freedom of belief. He wanted Kuwaiti authorities to declare that he was protected by the Constitution. "No official statement has come forward on my behalf to say this man is protected by the Constitution," he said. Kuwait's Constitution says freedom of belief is absolute. Public abandonment of Islam is rare in the Arab world. Mr Hussein's conversion has been denounced in mosques by preachers, and by MPs. Mr Hussein said one MP had called publicly for his killing. The judge who ruled on the case, Mr Jaafar al-Mazidi, said that although Muslims might interpret his finding as permission to kill Mr Hussein, this

would be a violation of criminal law and he did not believe Kuwaitis would do such a thing. The Islamic lawyers who brought the suit against Mr Hussein said they had been offended to hear of his conversion. They asked the court to declare him an apostate and to strip him of several civil rights, including his nationality. They did not want him killed, they said. The Shi'ite Family Court ruled it had no jurisdiction in matters concerning rights such as nationality. Mr Hussein converted to Christianity from Shi'ite Islam more than a year ago and changed his name from Hussein Qambar Ali. He had received numerous death threats since newspapers reported his conversion, he said. He had recently received visits from American and British lawyers acting for Western human rights groups who had helped him prepare his appeal. Kuwaiti lawyers had refused to take his case for fear of reprisals, he said. He argued that he never was a Muslim, saying that Islam was imposed on him by family and society and he never freely chose to follow the faith. Mr Hussein said he could not work and had not seen his children regularly because of his family's opposition to his conversion, which contributed to the break-up of his marriage last year. He had received many letters of support from sympathisers, including politicians in Western countries. One group had published his name and photograph on the Internet, appealing for international help. Western diplomats in Kuwait said they had discussed the case with government officials but declined to give further details." (Reuter, SMH, July 8, 1996).

"Autopsy rules offend Muslims" "NSW's Muslims have branded aspects of the State's coronial system as "highly offensive" to Islamic practice and beliefs, and want a partial exemption from the "indiscriminate" use of autopsies on their dead. The Islamic Council of NSW has called for changes in NSW laws to prevent Muslims who die from old age, chronic illness, car accidents or other non-suspicious circumstances from being subject to autopsy. The council's chairman, Mr Ali Roude, said Muslims were not asking for "special treatment", just recognition of their "special needs". "Islam does not allow any unnecessary mishandling or mutilation of the dead body, whether for medical or other curiosities," he said. Islam advocates the same-day washing and burial of the dead - a religious practice made impossible by the autopsy process, which takes at least 24 hours. The dead are believed to be traumatised by being naked in front of a stranger and to feel pain when handled. Muslims agreed that in some cases, autopsy was necessary but were beyond reason when the cause of death was clear, Mr Roude said. "Just because the soul has departed, it does not mean that the body is valueless nor totally disassociated from the deceased." Mr Roude said the community had a funeral director on 24 hour-call, guaranteeing burial within hours of death to give the dead "peace and lessen the emotional effects" on the family. The council has discussed the issue with the State Government and the Ethnic Affairs Commission, which is planning to review the State's coronial system next year to see if it fully respects the religious and cultural practices of Sydney's migrant communities. The commission chairman, Mr Stepan Kerkyasharian, said that while ethnic groups had to operate within the bounds of the law, it was important that practices and policies fully reflected Australia's cultural diversity. "Obviously, in a society as diverse as ours, there will be different attitudes," he said." (SMH, June 17, 1996).

Freedom, fundamentalists 'both losers' as court orders divorce "Cairo: A Muslim woman facing divorce because a court found that her husband's writings insulted Islam said the ruling was a blow to freedom in Egypt and would hurt the cause of fundamentalists. The court yesterday ruled in favour of the Muslim fundamentalist lawyers who brought the case, demanding that Dr Nasr Abu Zeid divorce his wife because his scholarly writings showed he was no longer a Muslim and so could not be married to a Muslim woman. "They (the lawyers) are the losers," Ms Ibtihal Younis said. "What they did has outraged people who were neutral and inflamed the world against them". . . In Cairo the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights appealed to President Hosni Mubarak to intervene in the case, which has caused serious concern among secular intellectuals. The human rights group also warned that the ruling could endanger Dr Abu Zeid's life. In 1992 Muslim extremists murdered the secular writer Farag Foda after an extremist sheikh declared that his work violated Islamic tenets. The case against Dr Abu Zeid has been in the courts for more than three years. It has been seen as a key challenge by Muslim fundamentalist lawyers want to replace secular law in Egypt with *Sharia*, or Islamic law." (SMH, Aug. 8, 1996).

"Tibet: Tea and sympathy for Dalai Lama rattles China" "London: China's campaign to justify its continuing human rights abuses in Tibet has hit a snag, with a decision by the Queen Mother to invite the Dalai Lama to join her for tea. The invitation from the most popular member of the royal family is the first time Tibet's exiled leader has been given hospitality by the royals and will severely embarrass Beijing. It marks another failure by China to sideline the Dalai Lama, who, apart from meeting the Queen Mother this week, yesterday addressed members of both houses of the British Parliament. In his address, he called for a concerted international effort to pressure China to improve human rights in Tibet and to start negotiations with his government in exile, according, to Reuter. As it became clear that a royal rendezvous would proceed this week, Chinese officials, who had pressured Whitehall to snub the Dalai Lama, angrily warned that the high profile given to the monk would have "an adverse effect" on the Sino-British relationship. The threat, directed at British business in China and at London's dealings with Beijing on the handover of Hong Kong next year, did not deter Clarence House courtiers, who said the Queen Mother's invitation is a private affair.

The Dalai Lama will also meet the Foreign Secretary, Mr Malcolm Rifkind, during his one-week stay in Britain. Ironically, while the royal meeting is seen as a sign of the Dalai Lama's increasing respectability within the British establishment, the exiled leader is facing hostility from a faction of Britain's Buddhists, which claims he is oppressing his own people. A sect known as the New Kadampa Tradition staged protests yesterday outside Westminster in response to the Dalai Lama's warning that their worship of a wrathful deity, Dorje Shugden, was undermining Tibet's political future. The sect, which is Britain's fastest-growing Buddhist group, with an estimated 3,000 followers and 200 centres, has mounted a smear campaign against the Dalai Lama, accusing him of being a "ruthless dictator" and opponent of religious freedom. Supporters of the Dalai Lama - who is due in Australia this year - say the sect is misguided and its worship of the deity demonic. Such is the ferocity of the sect's attacks that organisers of the Dalai Lama's tour say they are concerned for his safety. The dispute has distracted from his mission in Britain and led to claims that the sect was causing divisions which could only play into China's hand." (SMH, July 17, 1996).

Order to shun husband evens the Jewish score "An ancient biblical law invoked in Britain could have worldwide implications. In David vs David, Rachel wears power suits and sells high-tech medical equipment. Moses works as a computer programmer. Theirs is a 1990s divorce, but with an ancient twist: the couple's most potent weapons have been plucked from the ancient pages of Jewish law. Mrs David, acting through the British rabbinate, won a rare order against her recalcitrant husband: until he grants her a religious divorce, no practising Jew may speak to him or come within six metres of him. The order, called a *nidui*, could have an impact throughout the Jewish world, where women's groups are increasingly pressing religious authorities to do more to help wives such as Mrs David.

"This sends out an important message for other recalcitrant husbands," said Ms Blu Greenberg, a United States campaigner for women's rights within Jewish law. Rabbi Berel Berkovits, the religious judge behind the *nidui*, said: "It's having a powerful effect. It's depriving him of his social freedom, and he's sensitive to that." Egypt has become a centre for restoring the "virginity" of Arab women who have had sex before marriage, with clients coming from as far away as the Gulf states to Cairo's clinics for the secret operation. Mr David would say only that he was outraged by the order. His reaction pleased Mrs David, who said that since the *nidui* decree was issued her husband had taken action to renew negotiations which might lead to a settlement, including a divorce. "This is hurting him," she said. "He's the sort of person who likes to be welcomed into people's homes." The *nidui* was a response in kind to the equally ancient punishment which Mr David had imposed on his wife. Although he initiated their civil divorce after she left him, he refused to assent to a *get*, a religious divorce. For younger wives who remarry in civil ceremonies, not receiving a *get* can be devastating. Ancient rabbinical laws dictate that the children of their second marriage are *remazers* - bastards shunned by the Jewish community. The same is not true of children fathered by Jewish men who remarry in civil ceremonies, as long as those offspring are born to Jewish women. That has offered men in many Jewish communities a relatively painless way to harass or pressure their former spouses. "It's grossly unjustified," said Mrs David, 30. "It's got to be put right." The couple married in 1983 when she was 17 and he was 30. They separated in 1991. Mrs David cited abuse, and took their three children. Mr David was convicted of assaulting his wife after the separation and was given a suspended sentence in 1994. The religious judge who handled their case, Mr Pinchas Toledano, admits he did little

for Mrs David, arguing that Jewish law left him no choice. He derides Mrs David as an "actress" for going to the media over the issue. "The husband creates the union, saying, 'Thou art wedded unto me by this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel'," Mr Toledano said. "The wife is passive. That's the law." Like thousands of other women in the same position - called *agunot*, or chained women - Mrs David faced an uncomfortable choice: abandon her prospects of remarriage or abandon her religion. "Judaism is my life," she said. "I observe all the commandments, I keep the Sabbath and eat kosher food, and it's important that my children do too. I won't run away just because I have problems." Mrs David sought the shunning order after hearing that rabbis belonging to small ultra-Orthodox sects in New York had granted the *nidui*. Rebuffed by Mr Toledano, she approached Rabbi Berkovits, who is higher in the hierarchy. Already under pressure from Jewish women's groups to find solutions to the divorce dilemma, Rabbi Berkovits saw the *nidui* as an answer. The mainstream Orthodox rabbi persuaded his colleagues to issue the order in January. Jewish law operates on precedent, and other Orthodox communities will take notice of the order to shun a recalcitrant husband. The use of the *nidui* could spread." (SMH, April 27, 1996).

"Islam's born-again virgins forced to pay a high price" "The number of operations restoring the hymen went up by 25 per cent between 1965 and 1995, especially in Cairo, where 400,000 girls have had sexual relations before marriage," a medical source said. It is impossible to know the exact number of operations performed but the source said thousands of women undergo it in order to avoid scandal when they marry. "I do dozens of operations each month in my home on women from Egypt and various Arab countries," a nurse said. "It is not a deception. I am only allowing these girls to get married and have a stable life despite the mistakes of the youth. "Not a single husband of my clients has discovered that his wife was not a virgin when they married," she said. The nurse said the operation cost 300 Egyptian pounds (\$A140) for low-income Egyptian girls and up to 1,600 pounds for wealthy Gulf Arabs. "Hymen restoration is performed secretly in hundreds of clinics or in the homes of doctors and nurses in Egypt, while in the Gulf countries the operation does not exist" Dr Said Thabet, a gynaecology professor at Cairo University, said. The operation consists of sewing a gelatine capsule filled with blood or red liquid - known in Egypt as a "blood grape" - to the entrance of the vagina a few hours before the wedding. Egypt's official marriage contract stipulates that a bride be a virgin and religious authorities have condemned the operation as a falsification. But a police source said "these operations have led over the past 10 years to an 80 per cent reduction in crimes of honour, especially in the cities". "Magda", who had the operation in Cairo, said: "The society I live in forces me to use this trick because it does not tolerate any mistakes by women, even though my husband bragged about his sexual conquests before marriage." Doctors who perform the operation risk a prison term of six months and suspension from the medical union."

(SMH, May 28, 1996).

Phoolan Devi - the famous outlaw dacoit "Bandit Queen" on the fate of India's untouchable cast

"We want the right to our husbands. But parents, either out of greed or poverty... poverty makes you weak. At the age of 11 I was married to a man of thirty. I failed to grasp the meaning of marriage. That shouldn't happen. Girls must be consulted. If girls are educated and protected, parents will consider them an investment. The girls will be able to get jobs and not be forced to slave away for someone. Brides won't be burnt to get more dowries. Many girls from poor families are raped. They are robbed of their prestige." "What is life like as a law cast here in India?" Question by TV reporter. "We have no life. The rich exploit us to their heart's content. I pray I won't be born in this country in my next life. But if I am reborn here it mustn't be a poor family. My father used to say that if a poor man has a daughter, he must have many sons to protect her. Every poor person is in the same situation. It isn't just my story. Go and see how the poor are exploited. We work hard but we can't live a peaceful life. At dusk the village head will send for you or some other village elder will ask for your daughter. If you refuse, everyone will rape you. They arrive as a team at your home and rape you in front of your parents. The poor have no life..."

When I was 14 my cousin and the village elders implicated me in a robbery case. The police arrested me. Before that I didn't know about the police. They bashed me and did other things with me. Later when cruel people did atrocious things to me I thought the police were all-powerful. But the police at the station and the rich landlords work out an agreement amongst themselves. The poor don't get a chance to get ahead. We don't know where Delhi or Lucknow are. The leaders and the ministers don't listen to us". . . "Phoolan avenged her rape and the murder of her lover by allegedly killing 22 upper-cast men. They included residents who watched her humiliation without intervening, protecting those who killed her lover and raped her" (voice over violent shots). "When I was 15 or 16 I was murdered. I don't consider myself to be alive. I died a long time ago. Those dirty men... they were not ashamed of their deeds." (Notes from *Dateline*, SBS TV, April 27, 1996).

"I don't think there is anything in the Bible to prohibit the ordination of women." A newly ordained woman priest in the Anglican Church. (ABC TV, Feb. 10, 1996).

"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church." (1 Cor 14:34-35).

"I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control." (1 Tim 2:8-15).