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June 1996

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THE WORLD AHEAD

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MAILING ADDRESSES

USA office:
 P.O. Box 501111
 San Diego, California
 92150-1111, USA
 or toll free: 1-800-959-1641
 or (619) 675-2222

Australian regional office:
 P.O. Box 772, Canberra
 ACT 2601, AUSTRALIA
 or call: (06) 231-8166
 or freecall: 1800-816-543

Canadian regional office:
 P.O. Box 2400, Edmonton
 Alberta T5J 2R4, CANADA
 or call: 1-800-932-4264
 or (403) 489-9901

European regional office:
 LE SIECLE A VENIR
 Allée Grand Chênat 30,
 B-6280 Loverval, BELGIUM
 or call: (32) 71-218-190

Guyana regional office:
 P.O. Box 10271
 Georgetown, GUYANA

New Zealand regional office:
 P.O. Box 2767
 Auckland, NEW ZEALAND
 or freephone 0800-380-584

Philippine regional office:
 P.O. Box 1774, MCC
 Makati City 1254
 PHILIPPINES
 or call: 633-5735

South African regional office:
 P.O. Box 1154, Ferndale 2160
 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
 or call: (27) 11-664-6036

United Kingdom regional office:
 P.O. Box 2111
 Derby DE21 2ZW
 ENGLAND
 or freephone: 0800-136-362
 or 01332-835-498

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EDITORIAL

The Cult of Materialism



Roderick C. Meredith
 Editor in Chief

We are living in the most sensuous, worldly generation that has arisen for many centuries. Today's society is obsessed with materialism. Our world WORSHIPS material things and places their acquisition as the first priority in life.

Some of this "gimme" obsession does rub off—even on professing Christians. The Apostle John wrote, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16).

Can we honestly say that we do NOT love the world while we watch hour after hour of television? Many church members watch more murders taking place every week than most people would ever see in a lifetime in the real world—bad as it is! And the incessant "get, get, get" philosophy, which permeates the TV commercials and many of the shows themselves, certainly does rub off on us too.

We are NOT immune to Satan's broadcasts!

And what about the TV and rock music "idols"? Don't we and our children realize that the deep emotion, shouting and cheering that welcomes a homosexual rock star is a perversion of the fervent adoration and worship that belongs only to God?

Having lived abroad for four years of my adult life, I can perhaps see a little more clearly than most North Americans how much we tend to WORSHIP material things. Yes, *worship!* For vast numbers of people in this country will do just about anything in order to own a car, a house, a color TV. A man may take two jobs and work such long hours that he wrecks his health. The wife, even while her children are small, will also work long hours outside the home—sacrificing those precious hours she should be spending with her growing children, teaching them, training them, building within them a deep and abiding sense of security and self-esteem.

"But we just couldn't make it if I didn't work," the typical North American wife might blurt out. Make it? Make *what?* Would your family starve to death? Would they be unclothed or without a home? Well, no. The family just wouldn't have as nice a house. Or as big a color TV. Or would have only one car instead of two.

Of course, there are many cases (the plight of the poor) where a wife in our exploitive society virtually has to work outside of the home. Often, in such cases, the husband has literally or figuratively left the family. There wouldn't be food on the table if the wife or mother didn't

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The LAST GENERATION?

by Roderick C. Meredith

Are today's young people destined to be the "last generation"? You need to know and to understand the truly staggering events which lie ahead!

A lot of old folks still remember President Franklin Roosevelt's ringing declaration during the depth of the American Depression back in the 1930s, "This generation... has a rendezvous with destiny"! And indeed they did. For that depression-wracked generation experienced the Second World War, the Cold War, the detonation of the first hydrogen bomb and the space race.

Over the next 10 to 15 years, however, even more monumental prob-

lems will confront America, Canada and Britain. These threats will not be from outside powers, which could be conquered by resolute military action. They will be internal threats involving a whole series of deadly cancers eating at the vitals of our entire Western society. Tomorrow's monumental problems are not likely to go away unless there's a massive change in our entire way of life.

A recent *U.S. News & World Report* editorial by David Gergen dis-

cerns tomorrow's deadly peril for the United States, Canada and Britain from today's shocking news: "The stories flicker onto the screen with numbing repetition. In Chicago, two boys—one 12, one 13—are sentenced to prison after dropping a 5-year-old out of a 14th-story window because he wouldn't steal candy for them. In New York, two teenage boys and a young woman lock up a 13-year-old girl, repeatedly rape and torture her, then hang her up in a closet by her heels before she manages to escape. In a Los Angeles school, a fifth-grade teacher is hit by a stray bullet during a shoot-out between rival gangs. America, the winter of 1996.

"We hear these tales so often now that we are beginning to accept them as a permanent way of life. Instead of demanding an end to this social madness, we seem anesthetized. So, who paid much attention earlier this month when the Justice Department reported that the number of juvenile murderers tripled between 1984 and 1994 even though the teenage population was stable in size?... Since the juvenile population will grow considerably by the year 2000, there is serious danger that kids will soon be roaming urban neighborhoods like 'teenage wolf packs'" (Mar. 25, 1996).

Will we have "teenage wolf packs" haunting our cities, terrorizing our citizens? Unless our peoples bitterly REPENT and turn to God—the real God of the Bible—our nations are in terminal trouble. Frankly, nothing indicates that we're going to change. Teen crime and drug abuse are on the upswing. Notice what the *Wall Street Journal* had to say about this surging problem: "If you haven't talked to your kids about drugs lately, consider these newest numbers:

- Sixteen percent of 8th graders reported using marijuana during the last year, nearly triple the number in 1991.
- Illicit drug use by adolescents has risen to a 31 percent rate from 20 percent during the last three years.

- Only 36 percent of high-school seniors said they saw a 'great risk' in trying LSD once or twice. More than half said they could easily get their hands on the drug.

"What we're seeing 'could be the start of a new drug epidemic,' warns University of Michigan researcher Lloyd Johnston, who has been monitoring adolescent drug use since the mid-1970s" (Apr. 2, 1996).

Meanwhile, the increase of AIDS cases, the presence of the Ebola virus in America and the "Mad Cow disease" in Britain all give us a small foretaste of what is yet to come. And remember, there is still no real cure for full-blown AIDS and *absolutely no cure* for the "Mad Cow disease" (BSE). As carefully explained in last month's lead article on BSE, "Estimates suggest the death toll [for humans if they are at

risk] could run from 1,000 to 10 million" (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Mar. 24, 1996, p. 21).

Jesus Christ predicted that just such terrible societal conditions would be extant shortly before His Second Coming. "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven" (Luke 21:10-11).

The term translated "fearful sights" in the *New King James Version* of the Bible may also be translated "terrors" or "terrorist acts," as some commentaries point out. In the United States, we have

already witnessed the bombing of the World Trade Center and a U.S. government office building in Oklahoma City. Britain has experienced quite a number of IRA bomb attacks. But we must recognize that this is *only the beginning*.

Unless We Repent

We must realize that—unless we repent—the Great GOD who rules over men and nations is soon going to intervene and *shake us* until our teeth rattle! The nations composed primarily of British-descended peoples (America, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand) have been mightily blessed above all the peoples of the earth. We have been identified as part of the "Lost Ten Tribes of Israel." We have been recipients of the awesome birthright promise God gave the descendants of the biblical Patriarch Joseph. (If you have not yet done so, be sure to write immediately for your free copy of our thoroughly documented and beautifully illustrated brochure, *America and Britain in Prophecy*.)

Israel (or Jacob), one of whose sons was Joseph, was inspired by God to predict the conditions that would affect his descendants in the "last days" (Gen. 49:1). Notice what he prophesied for Joseph's progeny: "Joseph is a fruitful bough. A fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall. The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made

Page 4: A young school boy in the U.S.—1995 Photodisc. **Page 5 top:** A homeless Guatemalan boy inhales glue fumes from a plastic bag—Agence France-Presse. **Middle:** Romanian street children behind bars at a police station in Bucharest on February 23. The police netted hundreds of "street children" after raiding the city's sewers. It is estimated that thousands of these children survive on the fringes of Romanian society—Reuters. **Bottom:** A Liberian boy during heavy fighting April 16 around Monrovia's main military barracks—Agence France-Presse.

strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), by the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers" (vv. 22-26).

When you understand that we Americans, Canadians and British are indeed descendants of Joseph, the prophecy becomes very plain. By the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean, we *have been* separate from our brother nations, which inhabit primarily Northwestern Europe and are also descendants of the Patriarch Israel. Through our location in the temperate climates, our fertile soil and our rich deposits of oil, iron, copper and other minerals, we *have had* "blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath." Our

“arms” have been made “strong” by Almighty God who gave us resounding victories in World War I, World War II and all major wars of the last 150 years—until the stalemate in Korea and the defeat in Vietnam!

Later, God predicted that the modern descendants of Israel would turn away from Him. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame” (Hosea 4:6-7).

We have truly forgotten the LAW of God. As our personal and national prosperity increased, our SINS certainly have increased also! We must remember that God warned our forefathers of the results of turning away from Him. God said that if we misused the wealth and prosperity He would give us, then “the alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you” (Deut. 28:43-45).

Is this happening today to modern America, Canada and Britain?

Yes, indeed! The per capita national debt of Canada is even worse than that of the United States! However, by gross amounts, the United States retains the “honor” of being the world’s biggest debtor. What’s going to happen when our former enemies—such as Germany and Japan—begin to demand that we repay them the principal and not just the interest on the TENS OF BILLIONS of dollars we owe? As the book of Proverbs tells us, “The rich

rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender” (22:7).

First Profligates, Then Deadbeats

In actual fact, America’s national debt is vastly under-reported by clever financial manipulation. Notice this recent news release from the prestigious Cato Institute: “‘If the U.S. government was required to show its current unfunded Social Security liability, the national debt would be \$17 trillion,’ says Mark Weinberger, former chief of staff and counsel for the Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform. In a new Cato Institute study, ‘Social Security: Facing the Facts,’ Weinberger shows that not only will Social Security begin going bankrupt as early as 2013, but the Social Security Trust Fund is a myth. ‘The term itself masks—perhaps intentionally—the fact that there is no money locked safely away for future retirees,’ he says. ‘There are only promises by the federal government to repay the fund’” (Apr. 10, 1996).

Sometime over the next 10 to 15 years—and it could happen any day—foreign nations will get fed up with America’s profligate spending habits coupled with our total inability to repay our debts. What will happen then? All kinds of scenarios are proposed—a national debt default resulting in a massive depression. Or a bout of hyperinflation as the government cranks up the printing presses to try to pay the debt with “funny money.” Who knows?

The fact is that no one knows what the short-term financial scenario will be. But God’s sure word of prophecy makes it very clear that, eventually, the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic-descended peoples will be greatly humbled in the **greatest national punishment of all human history!**

Again, WHY?

God tells our peoples, including the Jewish people in the State of Israel, “All your lovers have forgotten you;

they do not seek you; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased. Why do you cry about your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable. Because of the multitude of your iniquities, **because your sins have increased, I have done these things to you**” (Jer. 30:14-15).

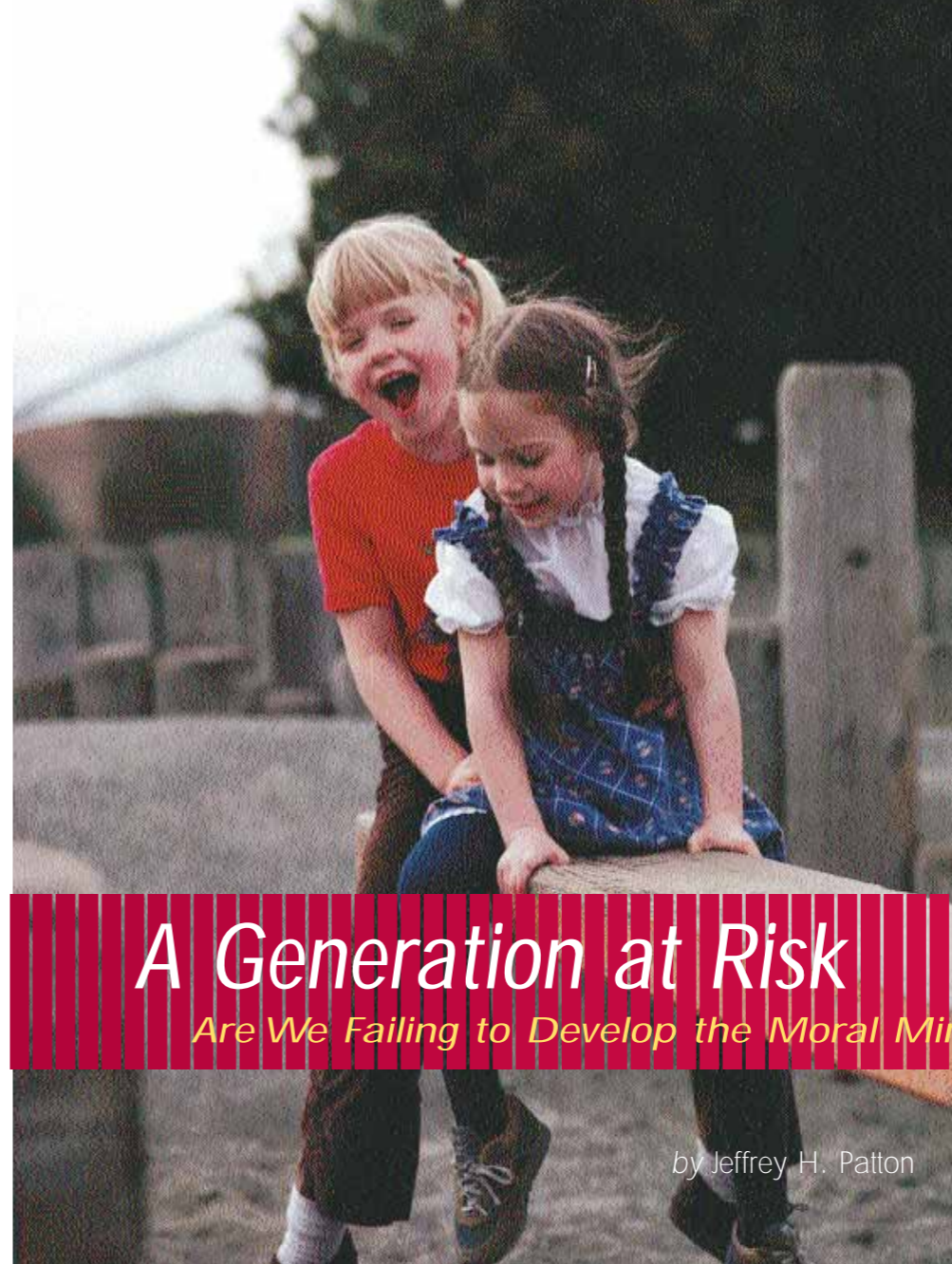
Who’s Teaching the Next Generation?

Note this analysis from the *Washington Watch* newsletter of December 4, 1995: “According to a new Census Bureau report, America is experiencing a rise in the number of Murphy Brown-style moms. The study, released in early November, shows that the proportion of college-educated, never-married women who have given birth has more than doubled in the past 10 years, while the proportion of young, single, black women giving birth has dropped. The report also says the illegitimacy rate among all never-married white women rose from 6.7 percent to 12.9 percent. The greatest rise in this group, was, indeed, among women who are managers and professionals.”

We can all see—and the Great God can see—that it isn’t just the uneducated or the “poor folks” who are involved in promiscuous sexual activities, rampant drug abuse, alcoholism, child abuse and other vile practices. It is often those who have EVERY reason to know better and to do better. But they just don’t care. God is not REAL to them, and they couldn’t care less about what He thinks of their licentious lifestyles!

A recent issue of the highly respected *Forbes* magazine said, “If ever the distinction between freedom and license was crucial, it is on American college campuses today. Courses ostensibly set up to teach

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A Generation at Risk

Are We Failing to Develop the Moral Mind?

by Jeffrey H. Patton

“Some crimes stun the mind, others sear the soul. In Richmond, California... townspeople were agonizing over the savage beating of a one-month-old baby. Ignacio Bermudez Jr. was dumped from his bassinet, pummeled with fists, kicked and possibly hit with a stick, leaving his skull cracked. His alleged assailants? Twin brothers, age 8, and the suspected ringleader, a boy of 6, who were playmates of Ignacio’s siblings” (*Time*, “From the Fists of Babes,” May 6, 1996).

Was this an isolated, uniquely American aberration? Consider this news from Corby, England, about 90 miles north of London: “Two girls ages 12 and 13 were accused of kicking a 13-year-old girl to death in a fight at a fair-ground.... The slain youth reportedly was trying to stop a fight Monday when she was surrounded by about 30 girls and beaten” (*Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1996).

A *Los Angeles Times* editorial, pondering the future of such violent, heartless children, commented, “We can

only hope it is not too late to save them—or ourselves” (“When Kids Do the Unspeakable,” Apr. 26, 1996).

Mass murders in Scotland and Australia have prompted new calls for more restrictive gun access laws. How effective will those governments be in stemming the rising tide of juvenile violent crime?

What has happened to our young people? Why are they becoming our oppressors? What are we doing wrong?

Developing Young, Plastic Minds

A human brain is a human brain, isn’t it? Or can it change from one generation to another? Is the thinking mind plastic: “formative; mouldable; modifiable; capable of permanent deformation... pliant; supple”?

(*Chambers Concise Dictionary; The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*).

Today’s teachers—frustrated by their students’ declining abilities to listen, read, reason, write or clearly express themselves—exclaim, “Kid’s brains must be different these days!” Could they be right? Education professionals have clearly noticed the “growing discrepan-

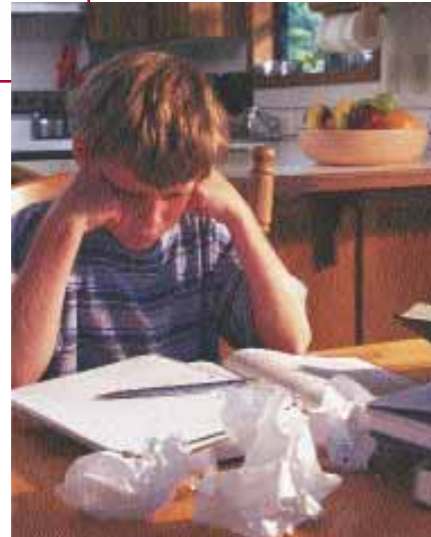
cy between what children were apparently [able] to do and what teachers thought they should be capable of doing. The College Board, which issues the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), has documented a steady decline in verbal and math scores from 1964 to the mid-1980s. Since then math scores have leveled off, but verbal scores are continuing to decline. Teachers of the youngest children, claiming they see more pronounced negative changes every year, warned that we haven’t see anything yet! (Dr. Jane M. Healy, *Endangered Minds*, Simon & Schuster, 1991, p. 15). Is there a connection between declining academic abilities and rising moral problems among the young?

The subtle neurological differences from generation to generation may be difficult to quantitatively measure, but due to research currently available, neuroscientists would agree today that a child’s experience—his environment—profoundly molds the supple neural structure of the young, growing brain.

When a baby is born, its brain weighs approximately 330 grams, about one-fourth of an adult's. The infant's brain has billions of neurons, relatively few of which are needed to be "hardwired" into neural circuits performing such "housekeeping" chores as regulating heartbeat, breathing, reflexes or body temperature. Most of these neurons are like "the Pentium chips in a computer before the factory preloads the software. They are pure and of almost infinite potentials, unprogrammed circuits that

might one day compose rap songs and do calculus, erupt in fury and melt in ecstasy. If the neurons are used, they become integrated into the circuitry of the brain by connecting to other neurons; if they are not used, they may die. **It is the experiences of childhood, determining which neurons are used,**

that wire the circuits of the brain as surely as a programmer at a keyboard reconfigures the circuits in a computer" (*Newsweek*, "Your Child's Brain," Feb. 19, 1996, p. 56).



"Early experiences are *so powerful*," says pediatric neurobiologist Harry Chugani of Wayne State University, that 'they can completely change the way a person turns out.' By adulthood the brain is crisscrossed with more than 100 billion neurons, each reaching out to thousands of others so that, all told, the brain has more than 100 trillion connections. It is those connections—more than the number of galaxies in the known universe—that give the brain its unrivaled powers" (p. 56).

It seems that different segments of the brain are "wired" according to a predetermined order—during critical windows of opportune development. Once "wired," neural circuits are only changed with difficulty. We all know that it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks. "The implications of this new understanding are at once promising and *disturbing*. They suggest that, with the

right input at the right time, almost anything is possible. But they also imply, too, **that if you miss the window you're playing with a handicap**" (p. 56).

The neural circuits regulating muscle-motor control are mostly wired up by a child's fifth birthday. Emotional control, social attachment and vision circuits are primarily linked up by age two. Math and logic functions are set by year four. The brain's language-ability window of prime neural development closes by about age two and one-half for vocabulary. Foreign language and musical abilities are primed for development by age ten.

What to Teach When?

Does this mean society should assign sports coaches to have toddlers run pass patterns, drill three-year-olds with math and language flash cards or push the Winnie-the-Pooh set to practice their piano lessons for endless hours in an effort to create a new Mozart?

Not at all! "External pressure designed to produce learning or intelligence violates the fundamental rule: **A healthy brain stimulates itself by active interaction with what it finds challenging and interesting in its environment.** The environments that we provide for children, the stimuli with which we encourage them to interact, and the ways in which we demonstrate for them the uses of a human mind [our personal example]—these are the means at our command for shaping both their brains and our cultural future" (Healy, pp. 81-82).

We can't cram education into our children in an effort to stuff their brains like so many sausages. But neither should we abdicate our parental responsibilities to nourish and encourage, thinking our kids will pick up what they need from thin air. "What does it mean to 'educate' a 4-month-old? Nothing fancy: blocks, beads, talking to him, playing games such as peek-a-boo" (*Newsweek*, p. 61). Educational experiences must be developmental-age appropriate—and active parental interaction is the key.

The issue of educational "readiness" is critical! Why can't babies study arithmetic and elementary school children calculus? The brain wires neural circuits together by *axons* (output parts of neurons). These axons "gradually develop a coating of a waxy substance called *myelin*, which insulates the wiring and facilitates rapid and clear transmission.

At birth, only the most primitive systems, such as those needed for sucking, have been coated with myelin. Myelin continues to develop slowly all during childhood and adolescence in a gradual progression from lower- to higher-level systems. Its growth corresponds to the ability to use increasingly *higher-level* mental abilities" (Healy, pp. 66-67). This myelination process continues into a person's twenties, and sometimes even longer. "The schedule of myelination appears to put some boundaries around

'appropriate' forms of learning at any given age.... **Some of the skill deficits of today's schoolchildren, in fact, may have resulted from academic demands that were wrong—either in content or in mode of presentation—for their level of development.**"

Inappropriate educational methods and goals, and the frustration they cause students, may be one major reason why students drop out of school and drift on the margins of society. But our modern, haphazard and often callous disregard for laying the appropriate neural foundation in the rising generation's brains is really the bottom-line reason why today's children—tomorrow's tennagers—will be the way they are prophesied to be.

Who's Teaching Deficient Thinking?

Dr. Healy writes, "Language shapes culture, language shapes thinking—and language shapes brains.... The brain is ravenous for language stimulation in early childhood but becomes increasingly resistant to change when the zero hour of puberty arrives. Severe deprivation of language during early years *guarantees* lasting neural changes that noticeably affect speech and understanding. More subtle forms of language deprivation do not show up in such dramatic ways, but may ultimately affect *abilities to think abstractly* [as per religious and moral issues], plan ahead and defer *gratification* [avoiding illicit sex and drugs], control attention, and perform higher-order analysis and problem-solving—the very skills at issue in American schools today" (p. 86).

Dr. Healy warns, "**The brains of today's children are being structured in language patterns antagonistic to the values and goals of formal education.** The culprit, which is now invading all levels of the socioeconomic spectrum, is diminished and degraded exposure to the forms of good, meaningful language that enable us to converse with others, with the written word, and with our own minds" (p. 86).

Why is this generation of children at risk? "Too much television is stunting the language development of middle-class children as well as those from deprived inner-city areas, according to a leading speech therapist. Dr. Sally Ward, who is considered the... [United Kingdom's] leading authority on the speech development of young children, believes babies under one year old *should not* watch television or videos at all. Children of two or three should watch for no more than an hour a day.... All the evidence showed, said Dr. Ward, that **children whose language was below standard at the age of three could be set back for life.** They are likely to be educational failures and failures in all sorts of ways. They will go to school with depressed language levels and the whole educational progress is held back" (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, "TV Exposure Damages Children's Speech," Jan. 21, 1996).

Is there some connection between children's violence and television viewing? California's Attorney General Dan Lungren said, "Children do not emerge from their mother's womb hating and killing. There's something in our culture. We're making it a badge of courage, a status sign to be involved in violence. It's rampant in our movies and in our *television*. We're probably more uncivil in the language we use than at any time in our history. Listen to the disparaging, insulting messages... the shock jocks, the rap, the Saturday morning cartoons and even the Internet. We've debased our culture" (*Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1996). According to newspaper columnist Georgie Anne Geyer, "Language tells what a people thinks about itself and its *destiny*," but "television's abominable grammar has tarnished the beauty of the English language" (Healy, p. 88).



Most estimates note that children and adolescents watch more TV than perhaps any other activity in their lives except sleeping. The average elementary school student watches 25 hours per week, the *normal* high school student views 28 hours weekly! In fact, the tube is on for an average of 7 hours daily in most American homes. **"Kids' shows are the most violent part of television, with 20 to 25 certifiably violent acts per hour—much more than adults see in prime time.** Add to that a recent study by the Washington D.C.-based American Psychological Association, which found that kids who've watched violent TV are more likely to commit violent acts, and you have some cause for concern" (*Child, Kids and TV*," Oct. 1995, p. 17).

By substituting the vicarious experiences of the violent, visual media for the real experiences of one-on-one interaction with concerned and caring parents, we are undermining the next generation's ability to have the language skills, problem-solving abilities, patient persistence and proper role models required for moral decision-making. Speaking for teachers everywhere, Dr. Healy writes, "Our job is getting increasingly difficult, however, because we seem to be standing in the way of an avalanche of brains that are misfitted to our educational objectives. A teacher can easily become engulfed trying to reconcile administrators' demands for 'achievement' with today's language and attention patterns. Unless the adult community decides to help us wrap these growing brains in the

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When Rivers Run Dry



by Douglas S. Winnail, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Water shortages threaten world peace. What lies ahead? The Bible provides key insights!

From a distance the earth appears as a blue planet because nearly 70 percent of its surface is covered by water. However, the view from space *obscures* what is actually happening on earth. Incredible as it may seem, many nations are actually running out of water! The issue of water shortages, which has been boiling for some time, is going to erupt on the world scene in a dramatic and violent manner in the near future. Such swiftly moving events will surprise and shock many unsuspecting people who are unaware of world trends—and Bible prophecy.

Critical water shortages are *already* a way of life for many of the

world's peoples. The *World Press Review* recently reported, "Eighty countries... *now* have shortages that threaten health and economies; 40 percent of the world [more than 2 billion people] has no access to clean water or sanitation. And as industrial, agricultural and individual demands everywhere escalate, **the situation is deteriorating**" (Nov. 1995, p. 8). The article, using information from the World Bank, states, "The situation in the Middle East and North Africa is 'precarious.' Northern China, western and southern India, parts of Pakistan, South America, and much of Mexico all face water scarcity." Worrisome situations also exist in the western United States,

Europe, the Caribbean and other parts of the world. With the global demand for water doubling every 21 years, the future looks not only dry, but ominous.

A Limited Resource About to Blow!

Speculative talk about impending "water wars" is being heard with increasing frequency. *The Futurist* reported, "Acute water shortages in the near future may be caused by world population increase and overuse of water supplies.... Future *global conflicts* may center on control of the last precious drop of water just as past conflicts arose from control over oil... control of existing supplies [of water] could become a *flash point for conflict* in the near future" (May-June, 1993, p. 56).

According to the World Bank's environment vice president, Ismail

Serageldin, "The wars of the next century will be over water" (*World Press Review*, Nov. 1995, p. 42). UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali warns, "The next war in the Middle East will be fought over water, not politics" (*National Geographic*, May 1993, p. 53). He later predicted, "The next war in North Africa would be fought over the water of the Nile" (*World Press Review*, Jan. 1995, p. 42).

But why fight over water when it covers most of the planet? Water's apparent abundance is deceiving. While water covers about 70 percent of the earth's surface, more than 97 percent of that water is in the oceans and is too salty for agricultural, industrial and human use. Less than three percent of the earth's water is fresh, yet much of that is tied up in polar ice caps. Only about one-third of one percent of the earth's water is available for human survival (Cunningham & Saigo, *Environmental Science*,

1995, p. 402). Although water is a renewable resource, it must be used wisely. The false notion that we have an unlimited supply of freshwater has fostered wastefulness and abuse of this vital resource.

Not only are the supplies of freshwater limited, but the distribution of water among nations and within nations is uneven in terms of geography and season. Some *water-rich* nations such as Canada, Brazil and the Congo use less than one percent of their annual available supplies. Other *water-poor* nations, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, use more than 100 percent of their annually renewable supplies by over-exploiting their aquifers. Critical water shortages in water-poor nations and regions contribute to human suffering and can destabilize governments—leading to internal violence and international conflicts.

Use or Abuse

To understand why water is becoming such an important factor in international affairs, it is essential to understand how it is used and abused. About 70 percent of freshwater is used for agriculture, nearly 25 percent for industry and the remainder for domestic purposes. As urban populations grow and nations industrialize, they compete with agriculture for available water supplies. This can threaten food production. On a planet whose population is increasing by about 100 million per year, a fixed amount of freshwater means we are headed for trouble.

Waters from lakes and rivers are often *diverted* to irrigate crops and to support urban development. Irrigation has played a major role in the dramatic increases in food production in the last 40 years. However, much of the water used in traditional crop irrigation methods is wasted: lost through evaporation and runoff. Irrigated soils can be destroyed over time by salt accumulation as water evaporates. Civilizations dependent on irrigation in ancient Mesopotamia, and possibly in the Americas, disappeared as a result of this destructive process. Many irrigation projects have proven to be unsustainable because they either lead to the salinization of soils or the drying up of water sources.

Diverting too much water from lakes and rivers also eventually destroys their ecosystems. River flow slows to a trickle and may even disappear. The Jordan River has been reduced to little more than an open sewer or drainage ditch through overuse, primarily by Israel. By the time the Colorado River reaches Mexico, after quenching the growing thirst of numerous states in the American Southwest, there is hardly any water left. Downstream communities lose their water supply, or what water is left is so polluted it is of little use. This does not promote goodwill.

One of the most dramatic exam-

ples of mismanagement of a freshwater resource is the Aral Sea in the former Soviet Union. Once the fourth-largest lake in the world, it has lost 40 percent of its surface area and 67 percent of its volume in the last 35 years because two rivers that fed it were almost totally diverted by Soviet planners to grow cotton. As the lake receded, salinity levels increased, nearly all aquatic life disappeared and the local fishing industry was destroyed. The climate changed, drinking water quality declined and the irrigated cotton fields turned salty. Storms of salt and pesticide-laden dust now contribute to eye irritations, intestinal diseases, lung problems and throat cancer in inhabitants of the region (Cunningham & Saigo, pp. 414-415). This is a vivid example of what happens when ecological principles are ignored or violated.

Where surface water is not readily available, wells are dug or drilled to tap water in underground basins or rivers called aquifers. These underground rivers of water fill much more slowly and can be depleted if pumped too vigorously. Sandra Postel notes, "Overuse of ground water is now endemic in parts of China, India, Mexico, Thailand, the western United States, North Africa and the Middle East" (*Unesco Courier*, May 1993, p. 21). It is only a matter of time until these aquifers are depleted. Populations dependent on them for drinking water and irrigation for food crops will suffer as wells run dry or water becomes too salty for human use. It is sobering to contemplate that a drought (or the loss of irrigation) in the U.S. breadbasket could rapidly lead to a *global calamity* (*Time*, Aug. 20, 1995, p. 59).

Environmental problems are destined to play a significant role in international affairs in the coming years. In a riveting article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, widely traveled journalist Robert D. Kaplan describes "how scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroy-

ing the social fabric of our planet.... **It is time to understand 'the environment' for what it is: the national-security issue of the early twenty-first century**" (Feb. 1994, p. 58). Kaplan quotes the views of Thomas Fraser Homer-Dixon, head of the Peace and Conflict Studies Program at the University of Toronto, that *future wars and civil violence* will often arise from scarcities of resources such as water, cropland, forests, and fish, and that as environmental degradation proceeds, the size of the potential *social disruption* will increase.

Dry Rivers Prophesied!

Most people do not recognize the biblical significance of these developing water crises—yet these events are going to dramatically impact the course of human history in the near future! It is significant that **the Middle East is the most concentrated region of water scarcity in the world, and tensions over water rights there could ignite during this decade** (*Unesco Courier*, May 1993, p. 20). There is a growing realization that "the Middle East is the *likeliest crucible* for future water wars" (*The Economist*, Aug. 12, 1995, p. 36).

Many may have forgotten that the 1967 Arab-Israeli War was fought in part over the waters of the Jordan, Yarmuk and Litani rivers (Paul and Anne Ehrlich, *Healing the Planet*, 1991, p. 179). About one third of the water in the Sea of Galilee [the headwaters of the Jordan] drains from the Golan Heights. When "Syria tried to turn northern Israel into a desert [in 1966] by damming the water [coming from the Golan Heights] Israel responded by bombing the dam sites" (*World Press Review*, Jan. 1995, p. 39).

This act contributed to the beginning of the Six-Day War in 1967. "The situation seems destined to go critical again soon. The nation of Jordan is on the verge of a severe water crisis" and Syria has insufficient water to meet the

domestic, agricultural needs of its growing population (Ehrlich, p. 179). The Israelis use about five times as much water per person as the Palestinians who accuse Israel of stealing their water (*World Press Review*, pp. 37-40). Water shortages could suddenly propel the nations of the Middle East back to the center of an increasingly violent international stage.

The situation that is developing in the Middle East and around the globe is beginning to look very much like the "latter days" scenario outlined in Bible prophecy. Endtime prophecies suggest that events in and around Jerusalem will become the focus of world attention and concern. It will be a major trouble spot on the globe with problems seeming to defy solutions (Zech. 12:2-3). The city will eventually be surrounded by armies and dominated by hostile nations for three and one-half years prior to the return of Jesus Christ (Luke 21:20, 24).

Water will also play a significant role in the future of other Middle Eastern nations mentioned in prophecy. Egypt is dependent on the waters of the Nile. As the most populous nation in the Middle East, it is now facing water shortages that will soon reach the critical stage. Egypt could go to war, or go over the edge into social chaos, if upstream nations such as Ethiopia and Sudan construct dams to divert a major portion of the flow of the Nile River. The Nile's watershed actually drains the highlands of ten countries in Africa—all upstream from Egypt. As those countries use more of the water of the Nile, Egypt—with its burgeoning population—will be threatened.

The Bible indicates that Egypt will be severely impacted by endtime events. Prophecies show that Egypt is to become a desolate waste (Ezek. 29:9): **"The waters of the river will dry up, and the riverbed will be parched and dry. The canals will stink... the reeds and rushes will wither, also the plants along the Nile... the fishermen will groan and lament"** (Is. 19:5-10 NIV).

These devastating ecological events will be accompanied by social chaos that the Bible describes as "Egyptians against Egyptians; everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom" (vv. 1-2). These scriptures depict a nation demoralized by the loss of its lifeblood—water. The biblical description resembles current projections that suggest "Egypt—which is totally dependent on the Nile—will exceed its water needs by 60 percent within two decades. This is a recipe for *internal disaster* and regional tension" (*Commonweal*, Mar. 25, 1994, p. 5). An Egyptian official commented, "Egypt is not a water-rich country anymore. Beyond 2000 our water budget is very dark and very serious" (*National Geographic*, May 1993, p. 67).

Another striking prophecy concerns the Euphrates River, which runs through Turkey, Syria and Iraq. The book of Revelation foretells a time period just before the return of Jesus Christ when "the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, **and its water was dried up**, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared" (16:12).

The idea of great rivers being dried up seems unreal to some. However, developments in this decade have now made this prophetic certainty a real possibility. The Turks have recently completed the giant Ataturk Dam across the Euphrates in Turkey. It is part of the Southeastern Anatolia Project, a system of 22 dams that will impound waters of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers to provide irrigation water and hydroelectric power for Turkey. Observers realize that "full development of the Anatolia project could *reduce* the Euphrates' flow by as much as 60 percent. This could severely jeopardize Syrian and Iraqi agriculture" (*National Geographic*, May 1993, p. 50).

A Turkish official has commented, **"It is true, we can stop the flow of water to Syria and Iraq for up to**

eight months without the same water overflowing our dams, **in order to regulate their political behavior"** (*The Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1994, p. 68). We are living at a time in history when long-standing prophecies are becoming a reality. Could it be that cutting off the flow of the vital waters of the Tigris and Euphrates to Syria and Iraq might be *the impetus* for angry governments to do battle with those who cut off their water supply?

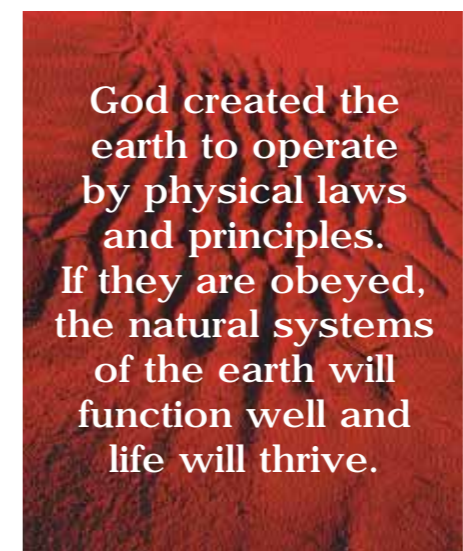
Bible prophecy clearly indicates that severe shortages of water will develop as we approach the end of the age. The Prophet Joel, looking into the future, describes the "day of the LORD"—the period when God dramatically begins to intervene in the affairs of mankind—as a time when "the food is cut off before our eyes... the grain has withered... The beasts of the field cry out... *for the water brooks have dried up*" (Joel 1:15-17, 20). Jeremiah speaks of empty cisterns and parched fields (Jer. 14:1-6). Hosea describes a period of time when the land "mourns," animals perish and people are at each other's throats—much of which is the result of misguided human activities (Hosea 4:1-10). These things are beginning to occur on a global scale.

God created the earth to operate by physical laws and principles. If they are obeyed, the natural systems of the earth will function well and life will thrive (Deut. 28:1-2). If those laws and principles are ignored or violated, serious problems will develop (v. 15). One of the consequences of disregarding the laws set in motion by the Creator of the universe is that "your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. The LORD will **change the rain of your land to powder dust**, from the heaven it shall come down on you till you be destroyed" (vv. 23-24). The salt and pesticide-laden dust storms around the shrinking Aral Sea are a dramatic testimony to the power of these verses. Wells and rivers drying up are also consequences of violating the God-given

physical laws that govern the operation of this planet.

Water Watch

During the discussion Jesus had with His disciples about His return and the coming end of the age, He emphasized that they should *watch* for the events He prophesied (Matt. 24:42). He explained that just as you know that summer is near when you see leaves coming out on trees, so **"when you see these things happening** [famines,



spreading violence and rumors of wars, water shortages and rivers drying up], **know that the kingdom of God is near**. Assuredly, I say unto you, *this generation* [that witnesses the fulfillment of these prophecies] will by no means pass away till all things are fulfilled" (Luke 21:31-32).

The Scriptures indicate that many will not be aware of the significance of the events taking place right before their eyes (Matt. 24:36-42). The Bible also reveals that society's leaders, especially in "Israelite" nations (see our brochure *America and Britain in Prophecy*) will fail to understand the meaning of rapidly developing world conditions (Is. 9:14-16; 56:10-11).

Ecologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich make a similar observation when they state, "Unfortunately, the public and decision makers have *largely ignored* the impending water crunch"

(*Healing the Planet*, p. 179). This is proving to be a costly oversight and will spell disaster for many peoples and nations in the near future.

Numerous scriptures also indicate that the *spiritual shepherds*—ministers and theologians—will deceive people because most do not want to hear what the Bible really has to say. The people say to their spiritual leaders, "Do not see... do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits [illusions about the future]" (Is. 30:10). These false spiritual leaders, who have *not* been sent by God, will prophesy false visions formulated in their own minds by human reasoning (Jer. 14:14; 23:25-26). The essence of their message will be that everything is okay. There is nothing to worry about because God loves you (Jer. 23:17). Most people prefer false comfort (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Jesus warned His disciples repeatedly that this would occur (Matt. 7:15-23).

God has commissioned those religious leaders He has chosen and sent (Rom. 10:14-15) to *explain* the causes of human problems (Is. 58:1), to *warn* of impending crises (Ezek. 33:6-7) and to *preach* the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, which lies beyond our current mess (Matt. 24:14).

The challenge you face today is whether or not you will *believe* the information that God has preserved in the Scriptures. Can you *recognize* the true religious leaders who effectively explain the Scriptures? Are you *aware* of the world events that God indicates will be important prophetic guideposts?

The water crisis we face is real. The Bible explains its significance. As one author wrote, "Biblical and prophetic warnings, it appears, converge with scientific realities at the watering hole" (Starr, *Covenant over Middle Eastern Waters: Key to World Survival*, 1995, p. 13). Perhaps it's time to start thinking about what will happen to you when the rivers begin to run dry!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Articles Appreciated

Thank you for bringing us the message on going to heaven ["Heaven—or Paradise on Earth?" in the March 1996 issue]. I had just read the book of Revelation and I am so thankful that you have brought this teaching to our attention.

Opal Thornton
Miami, Oklahoma

I want to compliment Mr. Meredith on the article "What Happened to Christianity?" in the April 1996 issue. That's the way to step right out there and tell people who we Christians are, then offer proof—for free! I say "we," because I have finally come to realize that without God's guidance, I can't control my life with any success at all.

Believe me, I've been trying to, unsuccessfully, ever since 1984 when I learned many truths through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's TV broadcasts and booklets. But now I am glad when I see something to repent of, no matter what it is. I know that it's now or never for me!

Dwayne McDevitt
Spokane, Washington

I read the article in the *World Ahead* magazine entitled "Where Do You Turn?" [in the May 1995 issue]. This article on the First Commandment was very enlightening. Keep putting such inspiring articles in your magazine. It was spiritual food to me.

Mary Oliver
Miami, Florida

Broadcasting the Gospel

Thank you for your continued efforts! The program on TV gets better and better, as does the *World Ahead* magazine. It is so good to see the Message going out so clearly again. For so long it was as 1 Corinthians 14:8 talks about—"an uncertain sound." Thank you for speaking

the Truth in love to the world!

Beverly Butler
Rancho Cordova, California

When certain questions get in my head, they never go away until I investigate them. In this case, I saw your program on TV and—BANG!—it was just like hitting the pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. It was as if I was hungry for days and then, all of a sudden, I was let into a food store to eat whatever I wanted!

Alex Valcourt
Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, Canada

I've been watching your program for several weeks. I appreciate the thoughtful exposition of the Word and how you present it. I've studied a lot of different churches over the last 25 years, and I find your doctrine to be more biblically based than the rest.

Robin Sharp
Tehachapi, California

A & B in Prophecy

Thank you and your staff, and especially Mr. Raymond McNair, for the new booklet *America and Britain in Prophecy!* It is wonderful to read these remarkable truths once again. Mr. McNair certainly must have devoted thousands of hours of research in the completion of this informative document. We ARE a blessed people, and *America and Britain in Prophecy* will show people why, in an extremely easy-to-understand manner.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Young
Pine, Arizona

Mr. Raymond McNair first began researching this project in earnest while living in Britain from 1958 to 1973. His masters thesis, entitled Key to Northwest European Origins, was written in 1962-1963. It explored the history and origins of the Celts, Scythians and Germans, and served as a building block toward his current work, America and Britain in Prophecy—ed.

Having just returned from holidays in Florida, I found to my great joy copies of *The World Ahead*. But the greatest joy of all was the copy of your wonderful brochure *America and Britain in Prophecy*. I have a copy of the late Herbert W. Armstrong's booklet on the same subject. Both make exciting reading. Please continue your wonderful work both in print and on TV and consider me a fellow laborer in the Work of Christ.

Jim Waterworth
Whitby, Ontario, Canada

Thank you, Mr. Raymond McNair and others, for the tremendous amount of research that went into the *America and Britain in Prophecy* brochure, which I'm still in the process of reading. Mr. Armstrong's old book was really good, but this one is even better!

Cheryl Livock
South Maroochydore, Australia

Prison Walls

I watched your program Thursday night. Wow! The way you brought Christ's message across was truly a blessing to me. I would like very much to learn all I can. I'm a prisoner in the Michigan department of Corrections, and have been for over nine years. Most of my life has been just that—my life. Now I want Christ to be Lord of my life!

B.C.
Marquette, Michigan

Please do send me a free copy of *America and Britain in Prophecy*. I have been an inmate in the Texas prison system for 18 years. I'm starved for information! This letter is mainly to let you know I really appreciate your beautiful magazine and I know I'll be better informed after reading your literature.

D.S.
Rusk, Texas

No Soliciting!

Thanks for sending me your literature. I enjoy reading it and will be writing some of my questions to you later. Meanwhile, by not asking for money or donations, that was the key for me. This policy, in turn, made me want to do what I can whenever I can. Now I consider the *World Ahead* magazine a friend in a troubled world.

Murphy Johnson, Sr.
Ontario, California

Difficult to Read

I really don't know how much good this will do. I'm sure the format of *The World Ahead* has already been laid out. But I find the shiny gloss on the pages make them difficult to read. Lots of the other ladies here who read the magazine had the same complaint. So I was "elected" to write in. Maybe you can help us.

Opal Hopkins
Strawn, Texas

You and your friends have not been the only readers to comment on this problem. After hearing from some of our readers, we have decided to change the paper stock that The World Ahead is printed on to one with a less glossy finish. This change will be reflected in the July-August issue—ed.

We welcome your comments, criticism or questions. Please mail letters for this section to "Letters to the Editor" at our U.S. address. Be sure to include your name, address and daytime phone number. We reserve the right to edit your comments for clarity, propriety or space.

EDITORIAL (continued from page 3)

work. Let me make clear that I am not talking about these situations—but about the cases where a young mother *could* stay home if she and her husband were genuinely frugal.

You see, some of us in the U.S. and Canada are *so accustomed* to absolute affluence that even some of you may feel a little edgy as you read this editorial. But I can assure you that *thousands* of people in Britain, Europe and Asia think it is both pitiful and amusing that North Americans feel they "need" so many extravagant material comforts—comforts that were UNHEARD OF until the last generation or two.

Yet millions of North American teenage boys would figuratively "die" if they couldn't have their own cars, stereos and other material gadgets. And millions of adolescent girls would also "die" if they couldn't wear certain types of designer clothes, have the use of a color TV, etc.

People young and old will literally work themselves into a fanatic desire to *possess* material things. These things, then, and this desire becomes a definite form of IDOLATRY. If we are to be God's people, we MUST recognize materialism for what it is and REPENT of this selfish, rotten approach to life.

We must stop allowing crass materialism to affect the *quality* of our spiritual lives, our families and our children. We must put God and His way of life FIRST—not material things. We must learn to SEEK God and His ways above *all* other things. After describing how God will take care of all our material needs, Jesus Christ said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33).

To be true Christians, you and I must really *do* this.



Do you know what is prophesied to happen in the near future? You need to know! Write in today for your free brochure. AMERICA AND BRITAIN IN PROPHECY

See page 3 for our addresses and phone numbers.

AN ANCIENT LAND DRENCHED IN BLOOD—

WATCH THE

MIDEAST

POWDER KEG!

by Raymond F. McNair

Why incessant strife and bloodshed in the volatile Middle East?
What historic factors impel Jews and Arabs—blood brothers!—to continued violence?
Will Jimmy Carter's "anguished cry for peace" ever be realized in the turbulent Mideast?

In April, Israel launched "Operation Grapes of Wrath" against Iranian-backed, Syrian-tolerated Hezbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon. Why this most recent display of Israeli wrath? For

some time the Hezbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon had been firing Katyusha rockets and mortar shells at civilians in northern Israel.

In response, the Israelis pounded suspected Hezbollah targets with

artillery, F-16 fighter jets and helicopter gunships. They struck at suspected Hezbollah targets as well as Lebanese power stations, highways and other infrastructure. Since Israel had warned the civilians in target

areas to flee, nearly half a million refugees took to the roads, mostly heading north, hoping to escape this latest round of retaliation. Israel was trying to send a clear message—to Hezbollah, Iran, the Lebanese government and Syria's President Assad who ultimately controls Hezbollah's ability to operate—that a heavy price would be paid (at least by Lebanese civilians) for continued attacks against the northern Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona.

Israel had carefully planned Grapes of Wrath, hoping the latest laser- and radar-guided weapons systems might prevent unintended civilian casualties. But, according to the Israelis, something went terribly wrong. When Hezbollah guerrillas attacked Israel from a position only 200 yards away from a UN peacekeeping compound in Qana, Lebanon, the Israelis fired back at the guerrilla rocket position. But five 155-millimeter artillery rounds overshot their mark and killed more than 100 civilians who had taken refuge at the base. A United Nations report, however, claims, "While the possibility cannot be ruled out completely, it is unlikely that the shelling of the United Nations compound was the result of gross technical and/or procedural errors" (*Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1996). The UN report also noted that two or three Hezbollah fighters entered the UN compound to rejoin their families either before or after the Israelis fired.

This carnage, whether unintentional or deliberate, caused an international outcry! President Bill Clinton sent Secretary of State Warren Christopher scurrying to Jerusalem and Damascus to broker a cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah. After shuttling between the two cities, he obtained a written—though *unsigned*—truce: Hezbollah guerrillas would stop firing rockets and mortars into Israel,

and Israel would cease attacking civilian targets in southern Lebanon. All told, the 16-day Grapes of Wrath offensive had claimed about 160 lives. Many others were injured, heavy property damage was sustained and more than 400,000 refugees had been temporarily displaced. Israel's retaliatory military operation threatened to stall the Mideast peace process.

But in spite of this, another small step was recently taken toward settling some Israeli-Palestinian differences when the Palestine National Council voted by an overwhelming majority (504 to 54) to amend its charter, which previously called for

the destruction of Israel. Afterward, Yasser Arafat said, "The changing of the [PLO] covenant is a debt. And we have to pay it."

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres's Labor Party responded the following day by dropping a clause in its platform that obstinately opposed the creation of a *Palestinian state*. But will these tiny steps toward peace really ensure trust between the Israelis and Palestinians?

Backdrop to the Mideast Impasse

What is the real meaning behind Israel's recent retaliation? Will real peace ever overtake the war-weary civilians of the Middle East? Why have so many Arabs harbored such deep-seated hostility toward the Israelis? Could this conflict prove to be the fuse that ignites another horri-

fying world war? Few people really understand the ancient historic threads woven into the fabric of today's Mideast impasse.

For millennia, the "Holy Land" has been drenched in blood, as conquering armies repeatedly marched across this unfortunate place. In fact,

Page 16 clockwise from top: A general view of the remains of a bus blown up in Jerusalem on Feb. 25. Jews marking the Warsaw ghetto anniversary on April 19—*Reuters*. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat speaking during a luncheon in Washington on May 1—*AFP*. An Israeli 155mm cannon firing at targets in south Lebanon on April 14. Palestinians chanting anti-Israeli slogans calling on revenge for the massacres in Lebanon on April 20. Peres making a point against the Palestinian attacks—*Reuters*. A shell exploding in Lebanon during the Israeli air raid—*AFP*. **Page 17 top:** Arafat and Clinton during their White House meeting on May 1. **Bottom:** Palestinian youths confront Israeli border police on May 7 over the West Bank land disputes. **Page 18:** A Palestinian resisting arrest by Israeli soldiers at the Damascus Gate of Jerusalem's Old City on May 9—*AFP*.

more battles have been fought on its soil than in any other area of the world! From antiquity, control of this strategic land bridge between Eurasia and Africa has proved vital to those powers that wished to dominate the Mideast.

To really grasp the deep-seated problems inherent in today's Arab-Israeli conflict, we need the light of God's Word to illuminate both history and prophecy. Christians and Jews have become quite familiar with the land of the patriarchs and prophets

through studying the Hebrew Scriptures. Jews, Muslims and Christians are all aware that, in the book of Genesis, God solemnly gave a “Promised Land” to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The real crux of today’s Mideast problem is neither the *religious* nor the *racial* differences between Arab and Jew. Rather, the heart and core of this tragedy involves conflicting claims to the disputed Promised Land! It is neither possible to understand the *source* of today’s Mideast impasse, nor its *solution*, without first turning to the pages of the Bible to examine the backdrop to this ancient conflict.

The former U.S. president, Jimmy Carter, a devout Baptist, realizes, at least in part, the source of today’s Mideast conflict. In his book, *The Blood of Abraham*, he repeatedly mentions that Jews and Arabs share the *same blood*. When he was president (1977-1981), Carter was instrumental in helping to bring the leaders of Israel and Egypt together as a first step in their frustrating search for lasting peace in the Middle East. In September 1978, President Carter supervised the signing of the Camp David accords between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. And, in 1995, President Bill Clinton brokered another peace accord—this time between Israel’s Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, chairman of the PLO. But are we about to witness *lasting peace* in the Middle East?

To Whom the Promised Land?

“Israel emerged as a sovereign state on May 15, 1948. It was the first Jewish state to be established in nearly 2,000 years. Its creation represented a fulfillment of the historic ideal of the Jewish people stemming from the traditional religious belief in God’s promise of the land of Israel to these people” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*,

“Israel,” 15th ed., vol. 22). For much of the past 2,000 years after Rome renamed “Judea” *Palaestina* in 135 A.D., Palestine was inhabited mainly by Arabs.

So who, if anyone, has a divine claim to the Promised Land today? The Israelis? Or the Palestinian Arabs?

Apart from the Scriptures, it is impossible to peacefully answer that question. God’s Word alone tells us who has a rightful claim to the Promised Land! Unfortunately, most people, even among those who profess to believe in the Bible, do not really take it seriously. Today, many don’t realize that “God, who made the world and everything in it... is Lord of heaven and earth” (Acts 17:24). Nevertheless, we need to heed what God tells us!

God divided the earth and set the nations according to His will (Gen. 10:5). Moses explained how God apportioned territory to Israel, saying, “When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations... He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel [not yet born]” (Deut. 32:8). He reserved, therefore, certain lands for His chosen people. The Prophet Daniel echoed the same theme when he explained that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (Dan. 4:25). As Creator and Ruler, He assigns to the nations their inheritances. But to whom did the Great God give this contested land?

Ishmael’s or Isaac’s Descendants?

What did the Almighty promise to give Abraham and his offspring? And aren’t the *Arabs* also his descen-

dants—just as much as the *Jews*? Both claim descent from the Patriarch Abraham. After he left Babylon and journeyed to the land of Canaan, God solemnly promised him, “To your descendants I will give *this land*

[Canaan]” (Gen. 12:7). Abraham realized the “LORD, God Most High, [is] the Possessor of heaven and earth” (14:22).

What was the extent of the land that the Almighty promised Abraham? “The LORD made a covenant with Abram [later renamed Abraham], saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates’” (15:18). But how did it come about that both Israelis and Arabs trace their ancestry back to Abraham, and both claim that land?

In frustrated desperation, Abraham’s wife Sarah, who was barren, gave her Egyptian maid, Hagar, to Abraham so that she might obtain a child through her (Gen. 16). Subsequently, Abraham had a son (Ishmael) by Hagar. Later, however, God told Abraham He would give the Promised Land, not to Hagar’s descendants, but to his wife Sarah’s offspring (17:1, 8, 15-16).

Then Abraham replied, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You” (v. 18). Not so said God! But God did promise him that He would establish His covenant with Abraham’s yet unborn son, to be called Isaac. “But My covenant I will establish with *Isaac*, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year” (v. 21).

Still later, God told Abraham’s son Isaac, “Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your

father” (26:3). Thus we see that God did *not* give the “Promised Land” to Abraham’s son Ishmael and his descendants, but to Isaac and his offspring. God did, however, promise to make Ishmael’s offspring (the Arabs) “a *great nation*” (17:20; 21:18).

Modern Arabs realize that Abraham (Arabic *Ibrahim*) is the father of their ancestor, Ishmael (16:16). “Arab traditions attempt to establish genealogies beginning with Shem [father of both Jews and Arabs] and *Ishmael*” (*Collier’s Encyclopedia*, “Arabs,” 1959, vol. 2). The Arab name for Ishmael is *Ismail*, and this name has been commonly used throughout the Arab world. *Ismailia* is the name of a city in northeastern Egypt, in the general area where some of Ishmael’s descendants have lived since antiquity.

Later, Hagar, herself an Egyptian (Gen. 16:1), “took a wife for him [Ishmael] from the land of Egypt” (21:21). Ishmael was half Egyptian, but his children by his Egyptian wife would have been three-quarters Egyptian. This helps to explain why modern Arabs share a very close affinity with the Egyptians. Of course, Ishmael had numerous wives, and the Bible says he had at least 12 sons (17:20; 25:12-16). A thorough study of the history of the Arabs reveals that, both in ancient and modern times, there has been considerable intermixing of the peoples of Ishmael (whom we now call “Arabs”) with their Egyptian cousins. Some who are now called “Arabs” have descended from Esau, Philistines, Phoenicians or from Lot’s sons, Moab and Ammon.

The Great Arab Expansion

Today it is generally agreed that the Arabs originated somewhere in southwestern Arabia, though some think their origin may have been

northeastern Africa. Properly speaking, the Arabs are those peoples who, since antiquity, inhabited a large portion of the Arabian Peninsula.

Did God keep His promise to Abraham that his son Ishmael would become a great nation?

After the death of Mohammed in 632 A.D., the Arabs conquered much of the Middle East, including the Promised Land. They then swept across North Africa and on into Europe, before being halted by the French king, Charles Martel, in 732. “In the space of one hundred years following the death of Mohammed in 632, the Arabs had carried the sword of Islam from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, holding at one time most of Spain, part of southern France, the isle of Sicily, all of North Africa and Egypt, all of Arabia, the Holy Land, Armenia, Persia, Afghanistan, and almost a third of India. The empire of the Arabs was larger than that of Alexander the Great or of Rome” (Louis L’Amour, *The Walking Drum*, pp. 171-172). The Arabs imposed their language, culture and religion (Islam) on most of the peoples whom they subjugated.

Today, a broader definition of “Arab” includes all those peoples of North Africa and the Near and Middle East who have a racial, linguistic or religious kinship to the peoples of the Arabian peninsula. The *Arab Bloc* now stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf!

Pan-Arabism and *Zionism* (the Jewish aspiration for a national home in the Promised Land) were destined to clash from the beginning. The Arabs, who had controlled Palestine almost continually since 636 A.D. until the Ottoman Turks captured it in 1516, believe they are the rightful possessors and heirs to the Holy Land. The Jews—who were driven out of Judea by the Romans in the second century A.D., and were oppressed by

successive conquerors—only began relocating to that land in appreciable numbers in the 1800s! They believe the land was given by God exclusively to their ancestors. Many Jews also believe they are destined to repossess their ancient homeland and make it blossom (Is. 35). A dispute over this strategic real estate is the crux of the problem between today’s Israelis and the Palestinians and their brothers in the surrounding Arab nations.

How the Jews Lost Palestine

Around 1400 B.C., the people of the Twelve Tribes of Israel took possession of the Promised Land under their leader Joshua. After the death of King Solomon (c. 930 B.C.) the nation of Israel was divided into two competing kingdoms—Israel and Judah. Those in the Northern kingdom of Israel were taken captive to Assyria and Media around 721 B.C. (2 Kings 17:6) and never returned to the Promised Land. Those in the Southern kingdom of Judah (Benjamites, Levites and Jews) were taken captive around 586 B.C. Later, in the late 500s B.C., approximately 50,000 Jews returned to the Promised Land and established a nation that eventually became known as “Judea.”

But the people of Judea were destined to go into a second captivity in the first century A.D. Christ Himself had prophesied, “And they [the Jews] will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away *captive into all nations*. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). When and how did this second dispersion of the Jews occur?

During the Jews’ wars with Rome (c. 66-135 A.D.), most of the Jews living in Judea were either killed or carried captive into the far-flung corners of the Roman Empire. In 135 A.D.,

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You CAN Take It With You!

by Dexter B. Wakefield

The cartoon looked something like this: Two guys with halos and robes were standing around on a cloud in heaven scowling with envy as another smiling fellow floated by in a cloud shaped like a Cadillac convertible. One of the two explained to the other, “He found a way to take it with him!”

Of course, this is only imagination and humor because the Bible doesn’t say that entering the Kingdom of God means people will stand around in heaven on clouds after they die. But what does the Bible say about “taking it with you?” Is there a reward for works? Do our works in this life provide any benefit in the Kingdom of God, or do they not matter at all after we die? If God *does*

Bible makes it plain that it is by grace that we have salvation, not by works: “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. For *we* are *His* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8-10). Eternal life, then, is not given us as a reward for our good deeds. Therefore, is there no need then for Christian good works—nothing to do?

God reveals what actions are right and wrong to humanity through His divine law as summarized in the Ten Commandments. The Bible says, “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4 KJV). All our repentance of sin, all

reward us for our works, is eternal life the reward?

You might be surprised to learn that you *can* take it with you, but your reward for works might not be what you expect. Unfortunately many are confused about this important subject.

God’s Economics Are Different From Ours

People sometimes chuckle over what is called the *Iron Law of Distribution*, which states, “Them that has, gets.” Some of us who are especially cynical in these times have turned that around to say, “Them that gets, has.” But Jesus Christ refuted and confounded this dominant attitude of our society when He taught, in effect, “They that *give, have.*” To understand Christ’s teaching about Christian works is the key to perceiving how God rewards His children.

If a reward is due compensation for works, why then does the Bible talk about *unearned* salvation through faith? The

our lawkeeping and all our good works cannot save us, because such actions cannot remove the guilt of our *past sins*. Only the shed blood of Jesus Christ can do that.

There is no question that Jesus commands Christians to repent (Acts 17:30), and also to do good works (Eph. 2:10). But even with a righteous life full of good works, we do not *earn* the power to give ourselves eternal life. Only God has that to give. In arriving at His decision to give a person everlasting life, Jesus does not put a person’s good works on one side of a scale and bad actions on the other to see how the good and the bad balance out. It is only Christ’s sacrifice that can reconcile us to the Father and make it possible for us to receive the gift of eternal life.

However, during our lives, good works are the operation of our active, living faith. As the Apostle Paul explained to Titus, “**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us**, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.... This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should **be careful to maintain good works**. These things are good and profitable to men” (Titus 3:5, 8).

Rewarded for Works?

Why then do some say that there is a reward for works? Because Jesus said so! Notice what He instructed His disciples. “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then **He will reward each according to his works**” (Matt. 16:27). Additionally Jesus taught, “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and *your reward* will be great, and you will be sons of the Highest. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil” (Luke 6:35). The Apostle John reminded the Church, “Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we *worked for*, but that we may receive a full reward” (2 John 8). Also, Jesus explained where our reward is kept and when our reward is received, “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matt. 5:11-12). He also said, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My *reward* is with Me, to give to every one according to his *work*” (Rev. 22:12). Christ brings our reward at His coming. Are the Bible’s writers all mixed up about the issue of works and grace?

The Bible unquestionably teaches that there is a reward for good works, but **nowhere does it say that the reward for works is our salvation**. What then is our reward? Extra halos? A harp? A luxurious Cadillac in the clouds?

What Reward Does God Promise?

Some of Jesus’ disciples asked Him in effect this same question. The Son of God said to those who followed him, “But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:28-30). Jesus explicitly promised these disciples *offices* or governing responsibilities in His Kingdom!

He further explained the connection between reward and office in the Kingdom by His parable of the pounds or minas. “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas [units of money], and said to them, ‘Do business until I come’.... And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, then he 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. Then came the first saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; **because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities**’” (Luke 19:12-13, 15-17).

Similarly, the servant who had earned five for the one he was given was made a ruler over five cities. But the man who hid his mina and gained nothing from it was severely criticized and had his mina taken from him and that one mina was given to the fellow with ten (vv. 18-24)! In this scripture, the Iron Law of Distribution, “Them that has, gets,” proves true! Jesus knows that those who have godly love and the character to be faithful in *little* will also have the same love and character to be faithful in *much* (Luke 16:10).

Regular readers of *The World Ahead* know what Jesus proclaimed to the world when He was on earth: “Now after John was put in prison, **Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God**” (Mark 1:14). Jesus Christ’s Gospel—His Good News—was that of the Kingdom of God, and he preached it everywhere He went. The Kingdom is referred to dozens of times in the Old and New Testaments, and Christ promised that He would return in great power and glory to establish it on earth. Jesus Christ is a King—the King of kings!

And Jesus has much work for the saints of God to do in His Kingdom. “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, and has made us *kings and priests* to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever” (Rev. 1:5-6). The book of Revelation repeatedly emphasizes this theme of ruling and administering the

future divine government: “To him who overcomes I will grant **to sit with Me on My throne**, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21). “For you... have made us *kings and priests* to our God; and we shall *reign on earth*” (Rev. 5:9-10).

This hardly sounds like Jesus plans for his glorified brethren to stand around in heaven doing nothing forever. Rather, Jesus Christ will establish a Kingdom on earth and will give those who persist in their Christian calling to the end rulership with Him. According to your Bible, this rulership and its offices are Christ’s rewards to His resurrected and immortal brethren.


Stated simply, the Bible teaches that obtaining eternal life and entering God’s Kingdom come only as a free gift by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. **But one’s respon-**

But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greater among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.” He then promised them “thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28).

Jesus was pointing out that in human governments—and nothing has changed much in 2,000 years—people seek power for their own benefit. Today’s leaders exercise authority for their own purposes. The usual human mind exercises authority for self-serving reasons. Most people understand that. This is why most of the current crop of politicians are held in such low esteem by the public. **But the spiritual mind exercises authority for the service of others.**

Godly love means having *outgoing concern* for others. It is the way of *give* instead of *get*. But, unfortunately, our standard human natures do not suddenly vanish completely upon repentance, baptism and

receipt of the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit works in us to transform us inwardly and to cause us to grow toward the stature of Jesus Christ—who *gave* His life as the greatest act of love. That is why the Apostle Paul said, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And to not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:1-2). Among other things, this means learning the principle of **servant leadership—having the good of others as a leader’s prime motivation**. By having this unselfish attitude incorporated into our very natures—as it was, and still is, in Jesus Christ—we can be very profitable co-rulers with Him in the future. This is a process that is made possible in a human being only by the indwelling of God’s Spirit.

When we use whatever means, ability or authority we have to do service for others in love and outgoing concern, these good works demonstrate Christ’s character and life in us. These personal characteristics of Christ that He is building in us, enable us to hold offices in God’s Kingdom—which are actually *positions of service*. Jesus set a high standard for those “good and faithful servants” who will be “kings and priests” in His Kingdom. This is why He taught that if one is faithful in *small* services now, then that person will have the demonstrated ability and character to engage in a far *greater* service in His Kingdom. **God’s reward for good works is actually a position of service**, and at death we “take it with us” in our own characters as transformed by God’s Spirit. 

Besides a reward for good works, there is something else we “take with us” into God’s Kingdom—our character.

sibility after entering the Kingdom of God is by reward according to that person’s works in this life.

It is not as if God owes us anything for living fruitful, righteous lives in this age. Rather, the divine Kingdom is for the benefit of the whole world and God the Father is pleased to give it to us. Jesus said, “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). But there is another reason God rewards our works with offices in His Kingdom.

Besides a reward for good works, there is something else we “take with us” into God’s Kingdom—our character. When Christ comes, God’s children will be resurrected (or transformed if they are still living), and they will “put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53-54). Christ will “transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working of which He is able to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:21). God will change *what* we are but not *who* we are. The Bible makes it very clear that our personal character must be *transformed inwardly* in this life for an important reason.

The Right Use of Power

In the previous quote of Luke 22:28-30, Jesus told the disciples that they would be given authority in His Kingdom, and the circumstances of His comments are interesting. Verses 24-27 state: “But there was also rivalry among them, as to which of them should be considered greatest. And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called “benefactors.”

QUESTIONS & SHORT ANSWERS



“I’ve heard about a coming ‘rapture,’ a time when Christ will secretly return and remove all true Christians to be with him in heaven. Is this really going to happen?”



It is true that many churches today teach about a coming secret “rapture,” in which all Christians are to be removed from earth and sent to heaven to be with Christ. Following this time, they say, will be the Great Tribulation—a period of world upheaval and misery unequalled in all human history.

In his book, *Armageddon—Appointment with Destiny*, author Grant Jeffrey explains this belief. “In many different Scriptures, Christ has promised His Church that He will come to take her home to be with Him before the time known as the Great Tribulation.... There are no warnings or signals given of the timing of the Rapture. The Rapture can literally occur at any time” (1988, pp. 131, 135).

But this doctrine was never taught by Jesus Christ or his apostles and *cannot be found in your Bible!* In fact, the entire concept of a secret rapture is a relatively new doctrine. This false teaching appears to have arisen from misunderstanding certain Bible passages pertaining to Christ’s return.

One of the primary texts used to support the rapture doctrine is found in 1 Thessalonians: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be *caught up* (Gk. *harpazo*) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (4:16-17). It is claimed that this “invisible” return of Christ is the first phase of His Second Coming. After the Great Tribulation, Christ will return visibly to the earth in phase two. In the interim, the saints will be with Christ in heaven.

But this cannot be! Let’s examine another passage in 1 Corinthians, which describes the very same event: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound,

and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (15:51-52). This is the exact same time that Christians will be raised into the air to meet Christ. And when is that time? At the last trump. **But the last trump sounds AFTER the Tribulation, not at the beginning** (Rev. 11:15-18)!

Another biblical contradiction to the rapture theory can be seen in the book of Acts. Christ’s ascension to heaven is related in the first chapter: “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, **will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven**” (vv. 9-11).

And so it shall be. Just as there was no “secret” or “invisible” first phase to Christ’s ascension, there will be no secrecy at His return. When Christ returns to this earth, it will be in power and glory, *seen and witnessed* by all humanity (Matt. 24:26-31).



“In Luke 14:26, we are told to hate our father, mother, wife, husband and other members of our family. Why would Jesus Christ want us to do that?”



Luke 14:26 says, “**If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.**” To many people, this is quite a shocking requirement! It doesn’t sound like it came from the mouth of the same One who said, “And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.... But love your enemies” (Luke 6:33, 35).

In other words, not only does Jesus require us to love those who love us—including our relatives—but he also demands that we love our enemies who hate us. Does the Bible contradict itself?

No, for “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). So what did Jesus mean? The answer lies in the meaning of the word “hate” in Luke 14:26. It is translated from the New Testament Greek word *misei*, a form of the verb *miseo*.

According to *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, this word is used not only of hate, but also “**of relative preference for one thing over another**, by way of expressing either aversion from, or disregard for, the claims of one person or thing relatively to those of another... Luke 14:26, as to the claims of parents relatively to those of Christ.” *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* says the word can mean “**to love less.**” So “love less” should be substituted for “hate” in this verse.

The *Today’s English Version* properly paraphrases this verse, “Whoever comes to me cannot be my disciple **unless he loves me more** than he loves his father and his mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and his sisters, and himself as well.” In comparison to the greater love and worship we should have for the Son of God—our Savior who died for us—our love for our families and selves must be less.

According to Jesus, the *second* great commandment is, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39). But He said the *first* command is, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (v. 37). We must put God before anything or anyone else.

Christ even showed how we would be tested in this regard: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.’ And ‘a man’s foes will be those of his own household’” (Matt. 10:34-36). Conflicts over God’s Truth and His laws will divide many families. But if it must, so be it—for obedience to God must take precedence over family unity.

Christ made clear in the next verse: “**He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me**” (v. 37).

Life, Liberty & PROPERTY!

by Roderick C. Meredith

The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution states that “no person shall... be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.” The importance of life, liberty and property did not originate with the English philosopher John Locke, who coined this expression in the 1600s. This principle’s foundations are far more ancient.

By including this clause in the Bill of Rights, America’s Founding Fathers were upholding a moral code that a much higher government had revealed long before. As James Madison, Father of the U.S. Constitution, said, “We have staked the whole future of American civilization... upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves... according to the Ten Commandments of God.” In past issues of *The World Ahead*, we have seen how this perfect code protects the sanctity of human life and is a law of true liberty—freeing us from harmful conduct. Now we will examine how this same law also protects personal property.

The particular divine precept that property rights are based on is the eighth commandment: “You shall not steal” (Ex. 20:15). The law of God is quite simple. If something is not yours, you are not free to do with it as you please without permission from its owner. Acting contrary to this rule amounts to theft.

Infractions All Too Common

Theft is so common today that instances of it rarely merit even a mention in the news—except when it crops up in totally unexpected places. Notice this from the *Los Angeles Times*: “The U.S. Naval Academy was hit by unprecedented scandal... when two current and three former midshipmen were charged with operating a stolen car ring” (“Car Theft Ring Case Broadens Naval Academy,” Apr. 12, 1996).

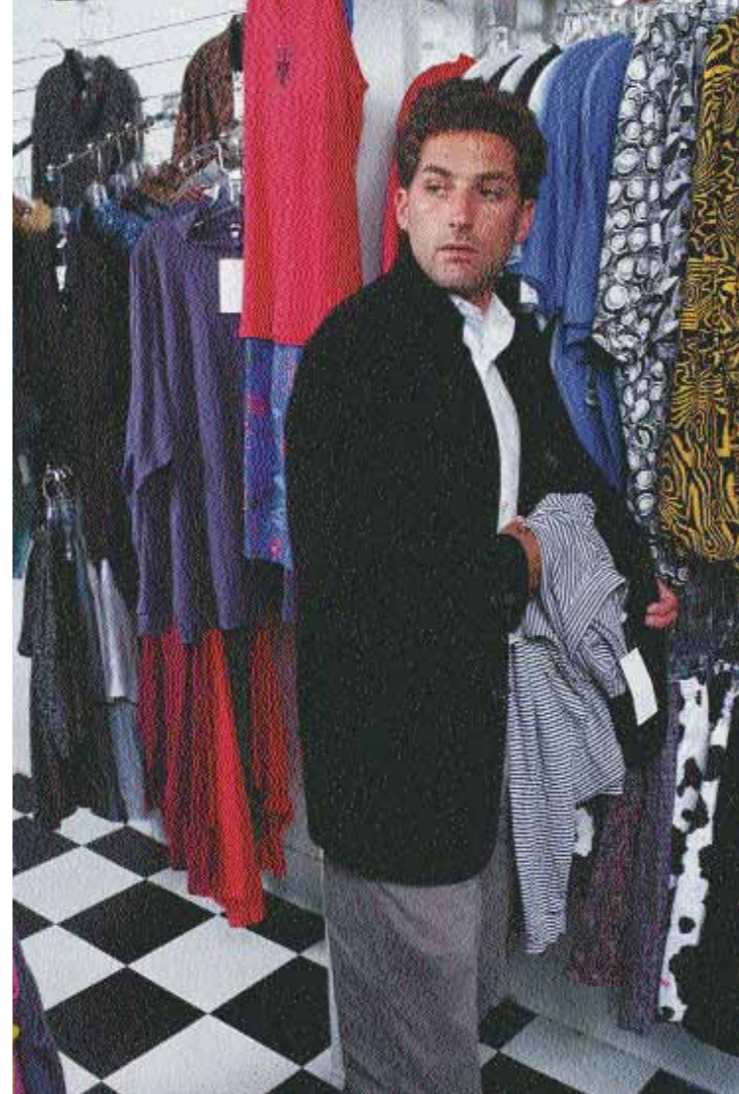
This isn’t the first blow suffered by this famed institution in Annapolis, Maryland, which is supposed to be training officers of high moral caliber. “In 1992, a stolen copy of an electrical engineering exam circulated through the junior class in the biggest cheating scandal in academy history” (*San Diego Union-Tribune*, “Torrent of Scandals Buffet Naval Academy Ideals,” Apr. 23, 1996). Cheating is taking a score or grade illegally—and is, therefore, a type of stealing. “Academy midshipmen take a pledge never to lie, cheat, steal or tolerate such behavior by other midshipmen. It’s called the honor concept. But that ideal has taken a beating.” So what needs to change?

Corrupt national leaders aren’t helping matters. Former Democratic chairman of the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, Dan Rostenkowski, was recently sentenced to time in jail. “Rostenkowski was charged in May 1994 in a 17-

count indictment accusing him of converting \$636,600 in federal money and \$56,267 in campaign money to personal use. He was charged with paying ghost employees who performed mainly personal work and kicked back money to him; using congressional stationery and home office allowances for personal use; trading congressional office stamps for cash; and obstructing justice” (*USA Today*, “Rostenkowski Expected to Make Plea Bargain,” Apr. 9, 1996).

Look at what’s been happening in Mexico. “In 1995, reported crimes in the capital rose an astounding 35 percent. It was the largest percentage increase on record, according to a spokesman for Mexico City prosecutors.... Armed robberies and thefts of all kinds skyrocketed. So far, 1996 gives every sign of being just as violent.... The situation is caused in part from a profound economic slump that has left millions jobless and desperate since the peso devaluation of December 1994. ‘Obviously, when there is a crisis that has lasted more than a year, certain crimes are going to rise—above all, robbery and property crimes,’ said Fernando Escalante, a sociologist at the Colegio de Mexico. ‘Those are the kinds of crimes that can affect the majority of the population’” (*San Diego Union-Tribune*, Mar. 4, 1996). Do hard financial times justify stealing?

As widespread as it is, armed robbery is probably one of the rarer forms of stealing. In all likelihood,



you have probably stolen something—maybe without even thinking of it that way. A few years ago, in a *Los Angeles Times* article, “America’s Least Wanted Criminals,” Craig Tomashoff noted, “Some of us take pens from work, others sneak into movie theaters.... The only difference among small crimes, apparently, is the justification for the illegal act. Certainly the most obvious reason is a selfish one. You see something you want. You take it” (May 10, 1993).

When “Dave,” goes to fast-food restaurants, he buys a sandwich and asks for a free cup to get water from the self-service beverage bar. Instead, he uses it to drink as much soda pop as he can. “He figures he’s saved hundreds of dollars over the years with this technique, but that’s not why he does it. ‘Maybe it’s because if you’re even remotely aware of how often the companies rip you off, you develop a sense of

justice about this,’ he states proudly. ‘Should everything they have cost as much as it does? No. When you see an opportunity to rip off a big corporation like that, I say do it.’ Naturally, there isn’t much guilt here either.”

However, God says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). He also says, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters... NOR THIEVES... will

inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Just what is God’s perspective on stealing? What is His eighth commandment all about?

Property Rights and Taxes

According to God, there are only a few right ways we can come to possess something. One way is to receive a gift—or inheritance—from another person or from God Himself. Another way is to buy it. How do we legitimately come to possess the means of purchasing? Again, it may be by a free gift. It could also be by money we earned honestly. If neither of these two methods of acquiring property is involved, there may well have been theft.

And lest any think otherwise, God is not a communist! The eighth commandment upholds the principle that everything is not owned equally by everyone. Of course, everything

could be owned by everyone—but only if every single person voluntarily gave all he owned to the collective whole. Any coercion to do so would be a violation of God’s law. So communism, as a system, is in opposition to the way of God.

In the soon-coming Kingdom of God, “everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree” (Micah 4:4). Everyone will have his own property. God gave ancient Israel inheritance laws guaranteeing that land would remain in the family. God’s Word allows buying and selling—and bartering. Through his parables, Jesus Christ supported appropriate uses of investing and banking to earn income (Luke 19:23). Thus, the free enterprise system has some elements of a godly system. But the greedy way in which it is often used today is not godly.

And governments of supposedly free-market nations stand guilty—as do all other national governments—of international thievery, whether through currency manipulation or outright confiscation of private citizens’ property. This is simply wrong.

However, it is permissible, in God’s eyes, for civil governments to tax their subjects (cf. 1 Sam. 8:10-17). Here is where many citizens break the eighth commandment. They will cheat the government by falsifying an income tax return. Yet God commands us to pay our taxes. “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God... For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor” (Rom. 13:1, 6-7).

Jesus Christ gave us this same principle when He said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s”

(Mark 12:17). The fact that the government may be laying heavy taxes on us does not justify our stealing from it in turn. The Roman government to which Christ referred was guilty of a *tremendous* amount of theft! No, as the old adage goes, “Two wrongs don’t make a right.”

Business Fraud

The *Los Angeles Times* recently reported on a civil settlement involving “Air Industries Corp., a Garden Grove manufacturer that admitted last year to shipping millions of sometimes-flawed aircraft fasteners to government and civilian customers” (“Test Falsification Draws \$6.8-Million Settlement,” Apr. 18, 1996).

Many times, such flaws are known by the manufacturer. By hiding them, an industrialist is trying to get more than a legitimate return for his product. In principle, he is simply stealing! Often, poor quality of material or workmanship is covered up by the use of false weights and measures. What does God say about this?

“A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight” (Prov. 11:1). He also says, “Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the short measure that is an abomination? Shall I count pure those with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?” (Micah 6:10-11). God *hates* this kind of thing!

He further exhorts, “Listen, you merchants who rob the poor, trampling on the needy; you who long for the Sabbath to end and the religious holidays to be over, so you can get out and start cheating again—using your weighted scales and undersized measures; you who make slaves of the poor, buying them for their debt of a piece of silver or a pair of shoes, or selling them your moldy wheat—the Lord, the Pride of Israel, has sworn: ‘I won’t forget your

deeds! The land will tremble as it awaits its doom, and everyone will mourn” (Amos 8:4-8 Living Bible).

Probably nowhere is this sin more prominent than in misleading advertising. While many advertisers are conscientious about their product marketing, some mislead, distort or even tell outright lies! Though lying certainly breaks the *next* commandment in our series, it is also a violation of the eighth commandment in this context because it is being used, in effect, to steal from people—they are paying money for a promised result that will never come. God says, “You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another” (Lev. 19:11).

Many “respectable” businessmen and community leaders have acquired great wealth through gigantic frauds of one type or another. “A typical executive is in his mid-40s, frequently travels on business, says he values ‘self-respect,’ and is very likely to commit financial fraud. That, anyway, is the conclusion of four business school professors, whose study on fraud was published in the February issue of the *Journal of Business Ethics*” (*Wall Street Journal*, “For Many Executives, Ethics Appear to Be a Write Off,” Mar. 26, 1996). The article goes on to explain that profit margins are often overstated to deceive stockholders into continuing their financial investment. This is *stealing* from the investors!

Workplace Woes

It is possible to be an entrepreneur and a Christian at the same time. God wants us to prosper materially—as long as we gain what we do through honest effort and do not set our hearts on it. The Apostle John wrote, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2).

A Christian employer must be fair to his employees. Notice the fol-

lowing tragedy that some workers are enduring as recently reported in the *Guardian Weekly*: “Imprisoned by their British employers, many foreign domestic workers are grossly exploited.... Celine (not her real name) is 25 and was hired in Africa. Her former employer would no doubt be indignant at the title Slave Master, but if obliging her to work 17 hours a day, denying her liberty of movement and refusing to hand over her wages constitutes slavery, then Celine was a slave in England of the 1990s” (Apr. 14, 1996, p. 22).

Granted, this is an extreme situation. But far too many employees are mistreated or underpaid by employers. The Word of God states, “You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning” (Lev. 19:13). The principle here is that workers should be paid a fair wage at agreed-upon intervals. Otherwise, it is robbery! But God’s law is so often broken in this regard: “Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries... have reached the ears of the Lord” (James 5:4).

Sadly, it is also equally true that many businesses suffer at the hands of thieving employees. This can occur in a number of ways. One way may be through stealing office supplies or other equipment. Another way may be through falsifying a resume to get paid more than the person’s level of ability deserves. Probably the most common way is simply by slacking off on the job—the employee takes his wage but withholds his full share of honest labor. In the eyes of God, that is stealing!

What is the answer to these workplace woes? The eighth commandment speaks to both employers and employees. To employers: a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work. To employees: a fair day’s work for a fair day’s wage.

Robbing God?

It might surprise you to know that it is even possible to rob the Almighty God. He declares, “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ **In tithes and offerings**” (Mal. 3:8). In His holy law, God decreed that a tithe—or tenth—of our income belongs to Him. This principle appears throughout the Old Testament and is reaffirmed in the New (cf. Matt. 23:23). We are also required to give offerings to Him.

Is it right for God to demand this? Absolutely! “For all the earth is Mine,” God says in Exodus 19:5. Also, “‘The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Hag. 2:8). Everything is ultimately owned by God by virtue of the fact that He created it all. Even *we* do not belong to *ourselves*. “Or do you not know that... you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Moreover, we could not acquire any wealth apart from God. When we prosper, we must be careful to give the credit to God. He warns us, “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God.... [And] say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth’” (Deut. 8:11, 17). Where does it *really* come from? The next verse answers, “You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is *He* who gives you power to get wealth” (v. 18).

So consider this. Initially, ALL of our income—100 percent of it—belongs to God. He provides our work environment, and gives us life and breath, enabling us to work. Yet all God requires is that we return a tenth of our income to Him. He lets us keep the rest. That is quite a bargain! We should be extremely thankful to God for this.

Do you realize that it is only

after we tithe that the rest of our income becomes ours? Therefore, if we fail to tithe, we are not only stealing the tithe, we are stealing our entire income from God! Many seem to think that tithing is giving a gift to God. It emphatically is NOT! It is paying back to God what is owed to Him. If you don’t pay it back, you are stealing! You are robbing God! As God continues in Malachi 3, “You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation” (v. 9).

Yes, people are cursed. They can barely make ends meet. They’re at the end of their financial ropes. They feel they can’t afford to tithe. How ironic! If we are faithful in tithing, God will be faithful in stretching our remaining income to cover more than the original 100 percent would have. God promises, “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this... if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it” (v. 10).

God may not always do this immediately. He may require you to obey Him and exercise faith for a while. But rest assured—if you continue to serve, obey and trust Him, your blessing will come! Do you believe God? He is not a liar (Num. 23:19). His promises are certain. You can bank on them—literally!

The Way of Give


God’s way is all about learning how to give instead of get. Jesus Christ said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). How true. For a thief, it is not enough to simply stop stealing. There is a positive application of the eighth commandment. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good,

that he may have something to give him who has need” (Eph. 4:28).

Throughout the Bible, the value of honest work is maintained. We even have the example of God and His Son. Christ said, “My Father is still working, and I also am working” (John 5:17 NRSV). And we are to follow their example.

It is by honest labor that we are to earn our living and obtain property and possessions. We should also work for an income so that any excess may be freely given to others. In the true spirit and intent of God’s law, we not only break the eighth commandment when we take something that doesn’t belong to us, we also steal when we refuse to work in order to help others! According to Paul, a true Christian is to be “distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality” (Rom. 12:13). Let us adhere diligently to positively obeying the eighth commandment. This is what God requires.

At the beginning of this article, we referred to charges brought in April against the participants in the car theft ring at Annapolis. James Barry, a Naval Academy professor of ethics and leadership, angered his superiors by criticizing the academy in an article he wrote for *The Washington Post* in March. He stated, “The Navy system is ethically corrupting.... If you are going to change the behavior of the midshipmen and the officers, you are going to have to change the system” (*San Diego Union-Tribune*, Apr. 23, 1996).

Change it indeed! In fact, the whole *world’s* system is going to have to be changed. Thankfully, there is a new world coming in which Jesus Christ is going to sit on the throne of this earth—ruling it with His perfect law and justice. Until that day comes, let each of us uphold that law and obey God’s eighth commandment, “You shall not steal!” 

MIDEAST (continued from page 19)

the Romans renamed Judea, calling it *Palaestina* or Palestine.

Palestine contained a minority of Jewish inhabitants from 135 A.D. until modern times. During the 1800s, however, Jews began immigrating to their ancient land. By the 1900s, the number of immigrant Jews had risen dramatically. When the initial mere trickle of Jewish immigrants turned into a flood, many Arabs became alarmed. Thereafter, Jews and Arabs began fighting over who should have political control of the land.

President Carter's Assessment

In *The Blood of Abraham*, President Carter writes of the “continuing bloodshed caused by the ancient rivalries between the Israelis and Arabs.... For centuries this region has been... **a center of conflict for control of the precious land surrounding the holy places of three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Islam and Christianity**—the faiths of those who share the blood of Abraham. In addition, the Arabian Peninsula contains the largest oil reserves in the free world” (pp. 3-4).

He adds, “To understand the roots of the hatred and bloodshed it is useful to go back to the holy scriptures of ancient times.... God’s early promises [to Abraham and his descendants] and how they must now be implemented cause conflict some forty centuries after the Patriarch Abraham fathered the Arabs and the Jews in the Holy Land.... Tragically for ‘the People of the Book’ who profess to worship the same God, the

scriptures are a source of more *difference* than agreement, inspiring more *hatred* than love, more *war* than peace” (pp. 4-5).

President Carter goes on to say, “God promised [Abraham] great



The Arch of Titus in Rome, which contains reliefs commemorating the capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, shows the menorah being carried off before the Temple was destroyed by fire—Art Resource, N.Y.

blessings, including the land from the Nile to the Euphrates [see Gen. 15:18].... Jews consider the covenants made by God with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses to apply exclusively to them” (p. 5).

What, according to President Carter, is the root cause of today’s Mideast conflict? “**The basic cause of continuing bloodshed in the region is the struggle for land**” (p. 10). But, admits Mr. Carter, “there is no magic answer to the Middle East puzzle.... Most chilling of all, could the present differences lead to the use of nuclear weapons or a direct military confrontation?... Even the ultimate horror of mutual destruction is not totally unthinkable.... It is widely assumed that Israel has atomic weapons [and] the capability to deploy them quickly” (pp. 195, 197).

What, in Mr. Carter’s view, is the main Arab-Israeli issue?

“The key issue and one of the most controversial, of course, is **what to do about the Palestinians....** There can be no successful negotiations for permanent peace unless the


Palestinians are included” (p. 204). Mr. Carter then says, “The Arabs must acknowledge openly and specifically that Israel is a reality and has a right to exist in peace behind secure and recognized borders.... Israel must

reconfirm its willingness to withdraw from occupied territories, as required by UN Resolution 242 and reconfirmed in the Camp David accords.... *Compromise* is necessary from both sides in any negotiation” (pp. 206-207).

President Carter concludes, “But it is Israel that remains the key, the tiny vortex around which swirl the winds of hatred, intolerance and bloodshed....

The Arabs must recognize the reality that is Israel, just as the Israelis must acknowledge Palestinian claims to civic equality and their right to express themselves freely in a portion of their territorial homeland.... The blood of Abraham... still flows in the veins of Arab [and] Jew... and too much of it has been spilled in grasping for the inheritance of the revered patriarch in the Middle East. **The spilled blood [of Abraham] in the Holy Land still cries out to God—an anguished cry for peace**” (p. 208).

How the protracted Arab-Israeli struggle ignited four major wars—and how those hostilities almost dragged the superpowers into a nuclear holocaust will be examined in a later article in *The World Ahead*. Furthermore, we will look at those Bible prophecies that reveal precisely *how* peace will finally be achieved in the volatile Middle East.

Bible prophecy reveals that a titanic struggle will yet engulf this troubled region before peace finally settles on it and the rest of the world as well (Micah 4:1-4; Zech. 14:5-9)! 

AT RISK (continued from page 9)

mental garments of language, reflection, and thought, I fear we will continue to see increasing numbers of children categorized as ‘educationally sick’” (Healy, p. 150).

An Effective Solution

The solution is simple, but difficult—challenging all parents to take a long, hard look at the learning environment they are providing for their children. Actually, there is nothing new in this challenge. In fact, the solution to morally and intellectually “sick” kids was discussed about 3,400 years ago!

Just before the Israelites were to cross over the Jordan River to claim their Promised Land, their human leader, Moses, assembled everyone to explain the official moral education policy that all the responsible adults in the community were to adhere to. “Moses convened all Israel, and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall *learn* them and *observe* them diligently” (Deut. 5:1 NRSV). This was not passive teaching or boring head knowledge!

God expected the adults of that generation to internalize His instruction and to teach it to their children by active example, oral discussion and the written word. “Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. *Recite* them to your children and *talk about* them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and *write* them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut. 6:6-9 NRSV).

When a parent diligently teaches his child the Word of God, the child’s brain will receive a foundation of wisdom, both spiritually and intellectually. “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple” (Ps. 19:7 NRSV).

In several scriptures, the Bible points out, whether explicitly or implicitly, how highly valued God considers a parent who teaches His ways to the rising generation. “For I have chosen him [Abraham, the father of the faithful], that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him” (Gen. 18:19 NRSV).


Another prime example is that of the human parents of Jesus of Nazareth, Mary and Joseph. God could have selected anyone He wanted, but He chose Joseph as head of the household because he was a righteous man

(Matt. 1:19), meaning he lived by Israel’s official moral education policy. Mary, too, was chosen because God was sure she would be a good mother to Jesus (Luke 1:28-38), teaching her baby the fundamental cognitive, emotional and spiritual lessons He would need to learn to fulfill His divine calling. Of course Jesus as a child had one advantage that most people don’t have—the Spirit of power, love and a sound mind from conception (cf. 2 Tim. 1:7; Luke 1:35)!

Joseph and Mary patiently took the time to talk with and teach Jesus. By age 12, Jesus’ thinking was deep and His reasoning was clear. He could express Himself with tact, incisiveness and clarity. How do we know this? “Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.... After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. **And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers**” (Luke 2:41-47 NRSV). Two others of Mary and Joseph’s children, James and Jude (cf. Matt. 13:55), also became great spiritual pillars in the Church of God. In fact their writings were considered so important that they were included in the Holy Scriptures.

In her conclusion, Dr. Healy observed, “Human brains are not only capable of acquiring knowledge; they also hold the potential for wisdom. But wisdom has its own curriculum: conversation, thought, imagination, empathy, reflection. Youth who lack these ‘basics,’ who cannot ponder what they have learned, are poorly equipped to become managers of the human enterprise” (p. 346).

To alter the structuring of a rising generation’s minds and thus the destiny of the world, we must restore parents to their critical, rightful role of teaching and nourishing their children in the basics of true spirituality, which is the foundation of moral and ethical values. This will require a profound shift in present social and economic attitudes. In today’s world, parents are gambling with their children’s minds if they allow electronic influences such as TV to structure those young, plastic, moldable brains.

But it is not enough to suppress harmful influences. Parents today must themselves implement God’s moral education plan. They must learn it and observe it themselves first. Then they can effectively talk about it at home and when they are away, when they lie down and when they rise up. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding” (Ps. 111:10 NRSV). 

LAST GENERATION?

(continued from page 6)

freshman writing are routinely turned into courses featuring leftist crusades du jour. Freshman orientation is treated as an opportunity to have spokesmen for homosexual, radical feminist, environmentalist and other causes, get a shot at a captive audience. Conversely, views to the contrary are not only screened out but shouted down, whether originating on campus or in lectures by outside speakers. Blatantly political questions get asked in academic job interviews, and those whose answers are out of step find themselves out of luck.... Many donors, alumni and even trustees have no idea how deep the dry rot goes. Smooth academic administrators know how to talk out of one side of their mouths to the outside world and out of the other to the campus crowd.... **Many Americans who love their country, including alumni and donors, simply have no conception of the scope and depth of the HATRED of this country and its values by large numbers of academics'** (Nov. 20, 1995, p.130).

Those academic leaders who HATE traditional American values also end up *hating* GOD Himself! That is obvious. They imagine that they—the “intelligentsia”—have no need of the concept of a personal God. They *deeply resent* the idea of a father-figure God telling them what to do. And it is a sad fact that many hundreds, if not thousands, of these persons are in key positions in the colleges, universities and religious institutions of our lands.

In their self-professed search for “truth,” they *deny* biblical truth. In their search for “answers,” they will virtually fight tooth and nail against any idea of a real, personal God who has AUTHORITY over their lives—over their private conduct.

Therefore, as they teach this approach—this *attitude*—to increasing millions of young people, or even to

innocent church-goers, the idea of a true God who created and now rules the earth and the entire universe goes poof.

No wonder our peoples are increasingly alienated from the concept of a real God—alienated from *obedience* to His laws. Speaking of our day, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy... having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Tim. 3:1-2, 5).

Truly, we are now living in the last days. The signs are all around us. Most people just can’t relate these signs to God’s purpose because that purpose has *never* been explained to them. Again, as Hosea prophesied, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6).

Through the pages of this magazine and over the *World Ahead* telecast—and through all our booklets—we try to give you this vital knowledge concerning the Living God, His divine purpose for men and nations, and the specific prophecies of His Word that concern our day and your personal life. May God help you to genuinely *study* His inspired Word and to heed these prophetic warnings!

Current conditions clearly indicate that we are living in the “last generation”! As Jeremiah states, we will not merely be destroyed from without, but *will be punished* because of our personal and national SINS—sins which are swiftly increasing.

America, the most powerful nation in the world, destroyed? In a speech on January 27, 1838, Abraham Lincoln said, “At what point shall we expect the approach of danger? By what means shall we fortify against it? Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant, to step the Ocean, and crush us at a blow? Never! All the armies of Europe,

Asia and Africa combined, with all the treasure of the earth (our own excepted) in their military chest; with a Buonaparte for a commander, could not by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track on the Blue Ridge, in a trial of a thousand years.

“At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen we must live through all time, or die by suicide” (*Abraham Lincoln: A Documentary Portrait Through His Speeches and Writings*, 1964, p. 35). Will our peoples heed this warning?

Describing how He will turn and forgive His people IF they turn from their sins, God said to ancient King Solomon, “When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:13-14).

God grant that all of you who read this will truly seek God’s face. Take the time to PROVE to yourself the *reality* of God and of His right ways and then courageously ACT on that precious knowledge. Then you will be shown the way of “escape” from the coming Great Tribulation, a time of national devastation.

Describing the convulsive upheavals in national and world events just ahead, Jesus said, “So you, likewise, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things are fulfilled” (Luke 21:31-32). So, the generation of young people now growing up may indeed be the last generation before the Kingdom of God is finally established on this earth. 