

God's reckoning upon a wayward world

For years, Israel has had to live with existential threats from Iran and its neighbors, yet hardly anyone has done anything about it. The world seems to take for granted that Israel must live with such threats without ever doing anything about it either. Imagine what would happen if Russia, or China, made such threats to America, or vice versa.

A few years ago, when the media went into another one of those cyclical frenzies with the notion that Israel was about to attack Iran and destroy that nation's nuclear facilities before it developed nuclear weapons, we said that according to biblical prophecies it is Iran who will attack Israel, not the other way around. Our prediction has proven true. In February 2012, Iran attacked a number of Israeli missions abroad – in Georgia, India, and Thailand, to mention those that made it into the media. From there, attacking Israel itself is only a short step away.

Iran has shown that its threats to Israel are not mere talk; that it is prepared to act on them. This has changed the name of the game. Israel is now entitled to reply and take action before a greater disaster hits the nation.

This is not going to make Israel many friends. On the contrary, biblical prophecies tell us that this tiny nation will face the wrath of the entire world. We have said much about those prophecies in the past, and may yet say more in the future, God willing, but for now we will only post this prophecy as a reminder.

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

Zec 12:2 "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem.

Zec 12:3 And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces,

Zec 12:4 though all nations of the earth are gathered against it. In that day," says the LORD, "I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness; I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.

Zec 12:5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem *are* my strength in the LORD of hosts, their God.'

Zec 12:6 **In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left,** but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem.

Zec 12:7 "The LORD will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah.

Zec 12:8 In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David *shall be* like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them.

Zec 12:9 It shall be in that day *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Zec 12:10 "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

Zec 12:11 In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

Zec 12:12 And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself,

Zec 12:13 and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves;

Zec 12:14 all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.

Many times in the past we have said that the world is in 'the preceding stages to the Great Tribulation.' We amend that now to read, 'the preceding stages **of** the Great Tribulation.'

The Arab revolutions, the fall of the Libyan dictator and Assad massacring of his own people in Syria, while the world stands paralyzed in the face of Russian and Chinese vetoes in the Security Council, Europe's and America's monumental debt burdens, the acute shortages of water, food, energy and resources around the world, and starving millions in Africa, have well and truly set the Apocalypse in motion.

This is exactly what we have warned the world about for two decades. But the world has not listened to us. It listened instead to its own prophets who have opposed us in every way and at every step. Now let them get their nations out of this predicament. God is very angry with this wayward world, and about to unleash His terrifying vengeance upon it.

Isa 63:1 Who is this who comes from Edom, With dyed garments from Bozrah, This *One who* is glorious in His apparel, Traveling in the greatness of His strength?— "I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

Isa 63:2 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?

Isa 63:3 "I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one *was* with Me. **For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes.**

Isa 63:4 **For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come.**

Isa 63:5 I looked, but *there was* no one to help, And I wondered That *there was* no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me.

Isa 63:6 **I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth."**

Now consider what Jesus Christ said in His famous Mount of Olives prophecy about the end time.

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

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

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Mat 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Mat 24:22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

Unless those days are shortened, no flesh would be saved alive. It is the elect of God that will keep alive some people in some nations, for many nations will vanish from the face of the earth altogether.

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

So few people will survive this worldwide catastrophe that **EVERYONE** is expected to come to Jerusalem, to keep what? Easter, Christmas, Halloween, Birthdays, Saints Days? No, they come to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. I am sure the prophets of your church will be able to tell you what that is and when to keep it. Happy Feast of Tabernacles!

Prophetic developments that portend catastrophe in our time

The wizard if ID, looking into a crystal ball:

"I see a time when peace will reign throughout the whole world".

Interlocutor: "I bet people are happy".

The wizard: "I don't see any people".

Scientists, politicians, even comics, are now contemplating the possibility that this world may have no future. Yet although the notion of an end to this world is on many a people's lips, there is universal rejection of the one and only way by which humanity could be saved.

Mal 4:4 "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *With the* statutes and judgments.

Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

Mal 4:6 And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse [*utter destruction*, Tanakh].

When God says that unless the world changes its ways and keeps His Commandments He will destroy it, He means it. And what does He expect from human beings above all?

LOVE! Love of children, love of parents, and especially love of our heavenly Father.

This kind of love is possible only in the context of the Ten Commandments – the first four regulate our relationship with our heavenly Father, while the last six regulate the relationship between human beings; the fifth one dealing specifically with love between parents and children.

The problem is that mainstream churches – Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc. – have been preaching for centuries that the Commandments of God have been done away with and are no longer relevant for daily life or needed for salvation.

Fundamentalist churches on the other hand, while preaching that the Commandments of God are needed for salvation, have put so much emphasis on the Law, they have forgotten about grace. They fail to understand that while the Law is required of all human beings, grace and salvation is granted only to those who overcome their carnal nature and place their life in God's hands, allowing Him to create in them a character suitable for His eternal Kingdom.

As Jesus Christ said in one of His prayer to His Father and our Father (John 20:17):

Joh 17:20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;

Joh 17:21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Before a human being can become One with God he must present his body as a living sacrifice to Him.

Rom 12:1 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.

Rom 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Rom 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:5 so we, *being* many, are **one body in Christ**, and individually members of one another.

Jesus Christ could not be more specific about the importance of God's Commandments in our struggle for salvation.

Mat 19:16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

Mat 19:17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, *that is*, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

Mat 19:18 He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, " 'YOU SHALL NOT MURDER,' 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,' 'YOU SHALL NOT STEAL,' 'YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS,'

Mat 19:19 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER,' and, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' "

Mat 19:20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

Mat 19:21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Mat 19:22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Mat 19:23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 19:24 And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

He went on to say the following to His disciples:

Joh 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

Joh 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—

Joh 14:17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Now all these things Jesus Christ said during His ministry on earth, but for those who say that the Commandments of God were nailed to the cross at the time of His crucifixion, here is the glorified Christ speaking to us from heaven, not once but twice

Rev 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, **who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.**

Rev 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.

Rev 14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.

Rev 14:3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

Rev 14:4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Rev 14:5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Rev 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those **who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.**

Anyone who loves God and Jesus Christ keeps the Commandments; anyone who does not keep the Commandments will not receive the Holy Spirit and cannot be saved.

Apostle John, the youngest of the Apostles, who received the book of Revelation, put a cap on this discussion with the following unmistakable statement.

1Jn 2:4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Many Christians make a virtue of going to church with a Bible under their arm. They read from it with their preacher, and then go home where they are supposed to continue to study it and meditate upon it. Well, they are supposed to read and meditate upon it, but it is doubtful that many do it. How else can one explain the fact that although they all read the same Book, they end up believing different gospels, and following churches whose doctrines are diametrically opposed to each other?

What happens is that they are conditioned to read the Bible not to discover its truths and the mysteries of God, but rather to confirm the gospel preached by their minister.

Four decades ago, while member of the Worldwide Church of God, I was encouraged to do the same. However, it seems that I took the leaders' advice too seriously, for instead of confirming what the ministers were preaching, I discovered that their gospel was quite different from the one preached by Jesus Christ and His apostles.

I learned English studying the Bible. I used to have a dictionary on my left, the Bible in the middle, and a notebook on the right. Yet even in my rudimentary English, after a couple of years, I could see that the gospel of the Worldwide Church of God was different from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

That disturbed me enormously, for the implications were horrendous. When one became a member of that Church, he had to leave behind everything, every aspect of his previous life, including friends and relatives.

I did not want to come in conflict with the leaders; I liked being a member of that Church. Aside from the fact that they convinced me they were the 'one and only true Church of God in the world', and that our destiny was God's paradise, I began to make friends and was contemplating marrying one of the girls from the Church.

However when doubts arise in your mind, you can only bottle up for so long then you have to speak up, risking all you have achieved, including losing 'God's paradise'.

I raised the issue with the minister, and the conclusion was exactly what I expected. No sooner did I finish speaking that he said, 'if that is what you believe then you are out'. And out of that Church I was, but not out of God's grace, as I would discover later on.

For a short while I was both angry and unhappy about it, not so much about what I was losing, but about their hypocrisy and their un-Christian methods. I wanted them to hear what I had to say, what I discovered in the Bible, but they would have none of it. That was a blatant disregard of Jesus advice on how to deal with such situations.

Mat 18:15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

Mat 18:16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY WORD MAY BE ESTABLISHED.'

Mat 18:17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

It did not take me long to realize that what they did to me was a blessing in disguise.

You would not believe the burdens the members of the Worldwide Church of God had to bear; far greater than the ones the Pharisees were putting on their people.

What saved me was the fact that my love of the Bible was not affected by their act. I spoke to them only after I became convinced that I was right. Such being the case, I could not see how God and Jesus Christ would support them and condemn me for raising important issues of salvation and morality.

Time passed, I emigrated from Canada to Australia, I carved myself a new career, and I settled down to what I hoped would be a long and comfortable life. My life was comfortable all right, until that Church caught up with me again. Nearly two decades after we parted company, I saw posters about an evangelistic campaign in Australia. I joined them briefly to see whether they were preaching the same old, false, and ruinous doctrines, and when I discovered that they did, I determined to do something about it. So in 1990, the first edition of *The Christian Herald* made its appearance. Little did I know then that what started as an attempt to expose fundamentalist hypocrisy and falsehoods would soon turn into a cry against the sins of the whole world.

When I left the WCG, and saw that those who claimed to be true 'Christians' were in fact a 'synagogue of Satan', to use the words of Jesus Christ, I began a search for the 'little flock' of Jesus Christ over which 'the gates of Hell shall not prevail.'

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

Mat 16:18 "and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

So I devised a test which I used to determine whether a church or religion was, or held in its ranks, that 'little flock' of Jesus Christ. Here is that test.

1. **No idolatry;**
2. **No doctrines of demons;**
3. **Sabbath keeping;**
4. **Passover observance.**

It is a simple test – and one could add countless more points to it – but it was enough for me to determine relatively quickly whether I was on the right track or not. Let us have a brief look at each point to see how this applies to the flock of Jesus Christ.

1. **No idolatry.**

This is the second of the Ten Commandments.

Exo 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of *anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth;

Exo 20:5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me,

Exo 20:6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

When I walked into a church and found it to be adorned with statues and images of heavenly things, icons as they like to call them these days, I knew that the 'little flock' of Jesus Christ would not be there.

2. **No doctrines of demons.**

Hard to believe, but I could not find a single church, mainstream or fundamentalist, that does not observe doctrines of demons. What are these?

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

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

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

1Ti 4:4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;

1Ti 4:5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

1Ti 4:6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

Old Testament forbade interracial marriages because that was designed for one nation only, but the New Testament is for the entire world. This is why Christians could not say to converts from other nations that they could not intermarry because they are of a different race, color or culture. Remember also what Jesus Christ said before He rose to heaven.

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Mat 28:19 Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Mat 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

And this is what the apostles preached.

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

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

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:29 And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

In regard to abstinence from foods, the same principle applies. Old Israel had many dietary and sacrificial laws, but these were designed to 'bring us to Christ', then finished.

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

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

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

It is these laws that Jesus Christ put an end to with His sacrifice, not the Ten Commandments. Those who keep dietary laws forget what Jesus Christ said about food too.

Mar 7:15 There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were considered defiled if they so much as even touched an 'unclean' animal, let alone eat it. In the New Testament, however, nothing that enters a man from outside defiles him; but the words that come out of his mouth defile him.

False ministers have added a new twist to this question. They ask their followers: 'does God care about your health?' The answer of course is yes. And how does He show that care? By telling them which animals are good for food, and which are not! Naturally, they never discuss these Scriptures.

Mar 16:17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

Mar 16:18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Nothing hurts the true believers, not even deadly poison. Apostle Paul certainly believed that when he said the following.

1Co 10:25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no question for conscience' sake;

1Co 10:26 "for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness of it."

1Co 10:27 If any of those who do not believe invite you *to a feast*, and if you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no questions for conscience' sake.

3. Sabbath keeping.

The Sabbath has been the sign between God and His people since ancient times.

Exo 31:12 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Exo 31:13 "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is **a sign between Me and you** throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you.

Exo 31:14 You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it* is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does *any* work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.

Exo 31:15 Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to

Exo 31:16 death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations *as* a perpetual covenant.

Exo 31:17 It is **a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever**; for *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

Exo 31:18 And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

Is this sign still valid in the New Testament? Absolutely! Israel according to the flesh lost the status of 'chosen people' because they could not keep God's Commandments. And why could they not keep them? Because they did not have the Holy Spirit! In the New Testament, however, there is no longer such an excuse.

Joh 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

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

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

Joh 16:14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you.

Joh 16:15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

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

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

Joh 16:22 Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

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

Joh 16:24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

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

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

Joh 16:27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.

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

Such promises were never made to Israel of old. In the New Testament, however, Jesus Christ is creating a new Israel, for a different world. Remember what He told Pilate about His Kingdom, and what He told Peter about the twelve apostles?

Joh 18:33 Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

Joh 18:34 Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?"

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

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

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

Mat 19:27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" So Jesus said to them,

Mat 19:28 "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, **you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

If the Sabbath was a sign between God and people whom He knew would fail, how much more is it a requirement for people who have been granted the Holy Spirit in order to overcome the weaknesses of their human nature?

The Old Covenant was made with carnal human beings for a purpose – to show them that they could not keep it and they need a New Covenant.

Jer 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

Jer 31:32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

Jer 31:33 But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jer 31:34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Therefore the Sabbath is more a sign between God and His people in the New Testament than it ever was in Old. Remember also that when Jesus Christ returns to this

world He expects to find His disciples observing not Sunday (which was never sanctioned by God or Jesus Christ to be a Holy Day), but the Sabbath.

Mat 24:20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

Mat 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

They must pray that their flight may not be in winter because it is cold and they may freeze in the mountains or wherever they flee, and not on the Sabbath because, even in the Great Tribulation, they are not allowed to carry heavy burdens on that day.

4. **Passover observance.**

This is what Jesus Christ said about the Passover, and how the apostles observed it.

1Co 11:17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you*, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.

1Co 11:18 For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.

1Co 11:19 For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

1Co 11:20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's

1Co 11:21 Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

1Co 11:22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.

1Co 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread;

1Co 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

1Co 11:25 In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."

1Co 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's

1Co 11:27 death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

1Co 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

1Co 11:29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

1Co 11:30 For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

It is clear that failure to observe the Passover brings about God's judgment. Yet most members of mainstream churches have not so much as even heard of Passover let alone observe it in the manner prescribed by Jesus Christ.

This then was the test with which I search the world for decades for the little flock of Jesus Christ. In the end, the result was as astounding as it was unexpected.

Surprise result in the search for the 'little flock' of Jesus Christ

After parting company with the Worldwide Church of God, and armed with my simple test, I set out to locate the little flock of Jesus Christ among the many denominations of this world. I was convinced that Jesus Christ would lead me to His people, but after a long and unsuccessful search, I began to have doubts; something was not right, but what?

Had God and Jesus Christ changed policy and decided to accept the almost unrecognizable and diluted versions of the true Gospel that are being preached in the world today? If so, the early Christians, and thousands after them, endured extreme persecutions and died unnecessarily for their beliefs. I could not accept that this would be the case, especially since I could not find anything in the Bible that would remotely justify this fact.

I never stopped studying the Bible, even during my university days, and when I could not get results among Christian congregations, I wondered whether Jesus' disciples could be found among other religions. So for a while I shifted my attention back to Judaism, as distinct from the Old Testament, then I looked at Islam, and after that I looked at eastern religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Shinto, and others, and when I did not get results among them either, I returned to Christianity.

I remember how during my university days, the head of the Religious Studies Department wondered where I was heading with my studies. After satisfying the requirements for one major in biblical studies, instead of enlarging and deepening those studies for the required second major, I shifted my attention to eastern religions. He thought I would have a good future in biblical studies, and without saying so directly, I felt he thought I was making a mistake. I could not tell him why I was doing it, or that I had a better knowledge of the Bible than all my lecturers and tutors in those subjects. I had a hard time abstaining from shouting aloud that they were wrong in what they were teaching, but that would have put an end to any hope of me obtaining a degree.

Shifting my search for the little flock of Jesus Christ to eastern religions was not based on a whim but on long introspection. The Bible says that people will be judged on their works, and that transcends the boundaries of religion. My problem was on how to reconcile good works with the beliefs in Brahma, Vishnu, Buddha, or any of the myriad of eastern gods.

In the end, I had no choice but to return to the Bible and pure Christianity. This is what the apostles believed and there is no argument, or possibility of any derailment from it.

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

And this is what Jesus Christ said of those who want to follow Him.

Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Mat 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

Mat 7:23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Now the will of Jesus' Father in heaven is unalterable:

Exo 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before Me."

If eastern religions are good at anything, inventing gods is one of them. There is hardly an animal or a dead person that is not a god with them. I trust the God of the

Bible who says that those who obey Him will be blessed and those who disobey Him will be cursed. One only has to look at the world and its history to see which God has proven to be beneficial. So coming back to the Bible and Christianity was inevitable.

Looking at religions from all angles, I concluded that anyone can put on a good show for a while, or show acts of kindness and charity under ideal situations, but few do so under extreme conditions. There is a reason why the disciples of Jesus Christ are subjected to extreme trials and tribulations, and why only those who overcome to the end attain eternal life and make it into the eternal Kingdom of God. This is what Apostle Paul said.

Act 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening
Act 14:22 the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "**We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.**"

And this is what Apostle Peter said.

2Pe 2:19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.
2Pe 2:20 For if, after they have **escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

One cannot escape the pollutions of this world except through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and that knowledge can be obtained only through the study of the Bible, not through the myriad of commentaries and 'Bible studies' that have filled this world.

It seems that everyone who had spent a little time on the Bible feels that he can write a commentary on it and teach others on how to study it. What they teach instead is how to conform to the doctrines of their particular church. How can one explain the fact that hardly anyone puts the Commandments of God at the centre of the Christian faith?

Here is Jesus Christ again.

Joh 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.
Joh 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—
Joh 14:17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Joh 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.
Joh 14:27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say,
Joh 14:28 'I am going away and coming *back* to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.

Joh 15:10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

Salvation is not possible outside the framework of belief and obedience to God and His Commandments. **The Holy Spirit, the Helper, cannot arrive in any other name but Jesus Christ, and without the Holy Spirit there is no salvation, no eternal life, no Kingdom of God.**

Works cannot be separated from faith; the two, plus overcoming to the end, create candidates for the Kingdom of God. Out of this pool of people, God is exercising His grace to choose whomever He wants for His Kingdom. As Apostle Paul explained:

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

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

Rom 9:15 For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE COMPASSION."

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

Rom 9:17 mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I HAVE RAISED YOU UP, THAT I MAY SHOW MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MAY BE DECLARED IN ALL THE EARTH."

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

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

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

God does whatever He wants with His creation. Everyone can obey God and accept the faith of Jesus Christ for salvation. Most people, however, would rather have a good life in this world than overcome trials and tribulations necessary to bring human nature under control and qualify for the grace of God.

Eastern people may have works, some works, but they do not have the faith of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and without them overcoming this world is not possible.

So unhesitatingly I returned to the Bible and to Christianity, but still without fellowshiping with anyone in the name of Jesus Christ. I never got this promise out of my mind that He would be with His disciples to the very end? So where were they?

My colleagues at work, at university, everywhere, found me friendly but distant and absent minded. I just could not tell them what was in my mind, for they would have thought me crazy as well. How could I tell people who hardly believed in God that I was meditating on the Law of God and on deep biblical mysteries? For me, the words of Jesus Christ were unshakable, and since He said that the Word of God is true, I unquestioningly believed it.

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

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

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

Joh 17:11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You.

Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be

Joh 17:12 one as *We are*. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name.

Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

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

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

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

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

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

So I kept searching and looking at the Bible from every possible angle, always trying to see whether I was missing something, or making a mistake somewhere.

Then, after two decades, I had a new encounter with the Worldwide Church of God. Their inroads into Australia with their old, false, and ruinous doctrines could not go unanswered, hence the decision to publish *The Christian Herald*.

That decision would turn out to be as momentous for my life as the decision to join that Church in the first place. It was like a window opened up in heaven. Not only did I see a myriad of Bible prophecies unravel before my eyes, but I finally had the answer to my years of search for the 'little flock' of Jesus Christ.

There was no 'little flock' of Jesus Christ in the world anymore.

That discovery was as astounding as it was frightening; astounding because it was totally unexpected; frightening because it had extraordinary end time implications.

There comes a time in the history of the world when every church in the world, including the Churches of God mentioned in the book of Revelation, fall away from the truth of God.

- 2Th 2:1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering
2Th 2:2 together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.
2Th 2:3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for **that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first**, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,
2Th 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.
2Th 2:5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?
2Th 2:6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.
2Th 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do* so until He is taken out of the way.
2Th 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.
2Th 2:9 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,
2Th 2:10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
2Th 2:11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the
2Th 2:12 lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.
2Th 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,
2Th 2:14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2Th 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.
2Th 2:16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace,
2Th 2:17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

The lawless one, who has been at work deceiving the world ever since, will be revealed just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, and destroyed by none other than Jesus Christ Himself. This realization was as frightening as it was full of hope. I realized then that I was never alone in my search, that God and Jesus Christ were directing my every step and leading me to this conclusion. That changed the name of the game. My initial intention to focus my attention on the Worldwide Church of God and its daughter churches would now shift to the whole world, crying out its sins and trying to bring it back to God before it was too late.

The death of its founder, Herbert W Armstrong, in 1986, started a slow process of decline of that Church. Some two decades later, the Church ceased to exist as a single entity. A mad scramble for its members ensued among its evangelists, with the result that more than three hundred new 'Churches of God' made their appearance.

Most are a carbon copy of their mother Church, but some have swung the pendulum to the opposite extreme, from deep fundamentalism to extreme liberalism.

Now even though I had little connection with them, from the beginning of this work some of them have never ceased harassing and defrauding us, trying desperately to derail us from our mission. Here is a typical exchange of emails with one of them.

Anthony Buzzard, December 27, 2009

Grigore, Is this a sabbatarian (saturday sabbath) movement?

Yes, Anthony! G.S.

Thanks, but I wonder why Paul then in Col 1:16, 17 states that the trio of observances is a shadow now superseded by Jesus who has come: Let no one tell you what to do in relation to holy days, new moons and sabbaths, which are a single shadow, but the substance is Christ's. Anthony

Hello, Anthony!

I can see that you are in a mood to argue a little here. Normally, I do not bother answering people that have lapsed from the truth, as the Scriptures tell us that it is impossible to bring them back to it. However, since I am not quite sure where you stand and where you are heading, I give you the benefit of the doubt. I presume you come from the stable of H.W. Armstrong, for you seem to struggle with the same doctrinal points that have divided that community for decades. I was once part of that stable too, but I left it behind long time ago.

First of all, I think you mean Col. 2:16,17, and not 1:16,17. "Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or in respect of a feast, or of the new moon, or of the sabbaths. For these are a shadow of things to come, but the body *is* of Christ".

Assuming that this is the case, the answer can be found just a few verses later: Col 2:20 – 22. "If then you died with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as *though* living in *the* world, are you subject to *its* ordinances: touch not, taste not, handle not; which things are all for corruption in the using, according to the commands and doctrines of men?" This goes well with Gal. 4:10 "You observe days and months and seasons and years"? Therefore my answer will cover them both.

The operative words here are, "according to the commands and doctrines of men". Apostle Paul was not referring to the Commandments, statutes and judgments that God gave Moses at Mount Horeb, but to "commandments and doctrines of men", of which the Jews had a lot. Remember what God said about the mission of Elijah:

Mal 4:4 "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *With the* statutes and judgments.

Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

Mal 4:6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

The Law that God gave to Moses in Mount Horeb with the statutes and judgments, will be valid to the very end of this world. And just the same, remember what Jesus Christ said about the Jews?

Mat 15:1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,
Mat 15:2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

Mat 15:3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?

Mat 15:9 AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE
COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.' "

In Colossians and Galatians, Apostle Paul was not preaching against the Commandments and the Holy Days that God gave Moses, but against the "ordinances" that the Jews had added in the course of time. I can give you two examples that prove this fact. In the book of Acts, Apostle Paul directed his followers to the "oracles" that God gave to the Jews. Look carefully at what he said:

Act 7:38 "This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to

Act 7:39 give us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt.

What happened when the Jews rejected those "oracles"? They turned back to Egypt; in other words they went back to paganism. It is the same these days: those who reject God's "oracles" are left with nothing but paganism.

The second proof comes from 1 Cor 11:20 - 30. Here it is:

1Co 11:20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

1Co 11:21 For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

1Co 11:22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.

1Co 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread;

1Co 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

1Co 11:25 In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."

1Co 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death

1Co 11:27 till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

1Co 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

1Co 11:29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

1Co 11:30 For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

If one were to take Col 2:16,17 literally, and not discern between genuine Commandments and Holy Days of God, and doctrines and commandments of men, then observing Passover would make no sense. Once again, what happens when people take this bread and drink in an unworthy manner? They bring judgment upon themselves, not discerning the Lord's sacrifice. Therefore, be careful what you preach, friend, for you could be on very shaky ground. I hope this solves your dilemma. G. S.

Grigore, thanks for taking time. However your points are quite odd! If the Law of Moses is in force for us all today, then physical circumcision for everyone (Gen 17) is mandated. If that is your view, then Paul was terribly wrong! I hope you know that Jesus speaks in Paul. You write us off! "impossible to bring them back"

In Col 2:16, 17(thanks for the correction on the chapter, 2 and not as I wrote 1),

Paul obviously (to all commentary, except those touched by the HWA movement), contrasts Christ with the shadows of the Jewish calendar. You are living in the shadows, alas. I think you have completely misunderstood Paul here.

Thanks for writing, and please reckon with the crippling effects of HWA!

Anthony

Circumcision was not given to Moses at Mt Horeb, but to Abraham. You can find answers to your other queries in *The Christian Herald*s. I think you need to spend a lot more time with the Bible. G.S.

Thanks: the point I was making is that you are not following Paul who did not insist in any way on circumcision in the flesh. As Jesus said circumcision was part of God's law? This shows you do not really keep the Mosaic Law. Nor should you.

The same applies to the calendar which as superseded shadow (Col 2:16, 17).

Jesus abolished the law in dogmas, Paul said. What do you make of that (Eph. 2:15-17).

Anthony

Circumcision was indeed part of God's law under the Old Testament. When Jesus Christ spoke about it, the Jews, and the world, were still under the Old Testament. You

seem to have problems understanding the difference between the Old and the New Testaments, where the Old ended and the New began, or what tenets of the Old Testament are still valid under the New Testament. If you cannot find these answers in the Bible, go to *The Christian Herald*. All these issues have been amply covered in our magazines.

Apostle Peter made the point that some of Apostle Paul's writings are hard to understand. Since Apostle Paul kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days and God's Ten Commandments, which aside from the weekly Sabbath, are the true Mosaic law - it should be obvious that in Col 2:16,17 he was not referring to these things, but to Jewish additions to the Law of God, a point made clear by the context of the passage, which speaks of commandments and doctrines of men.

I have had a brief look at your "Is Jesus Human". Pure and utter blasphemies! G.S.

Grigore, It (Circ in the flesh) is included in the Law of Moses (of course you are right about it originating with Abraham). But Jesus speaks of it as also of Moses as you know).

We all know that the New Covenant is passed. [*Pardon? The New Covenant is passed? What are we under then? G.S.*]

It is quite clear that Paul describes the calendar as a SHADOW in Col 2:16, 17!

The weekly and annual holy days are the past shadow. [*Then why did Apostle Paul keep the Sabbath, the Passover, and other Holy Days? G.S.*]

Paul simply states that: so why are you insisting on the shadow?

The New Covenant begins with Jesus and continues with Jesus speaking in Paul.

The contrast between the two covenants is dealt with in II Cor 3 and Gal 4.

Anthony

You've had your three tries; now as Jesus said, behind me Satan. Beware of coming back to me again with your blasphemies. G.S.

You, happily, are not God! or Jesus!

I am amazed at your brutality. Anthony

I warned you not to come to me again with your blasphemies. Therefore, you have chosen Satan, to Satan you shall go. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen! G.S.

This is a former fundamentalist follower of Herbert W. Armstrong for whom there is nothing sacred anymore: not in the Old Testament, not in the New Testament, no Commandments, no Holy Days, nothing, because we now live under shadows, he says. I do not know how big his congregation is or how many followers he has, but it is surprising that anyone would accept such blatant departure from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And he calls himself a minister of Jesus Christ. But then, the world is full of them.

He forgets that even though what Moses received in Mount Horeb were 'shadows of heavenly things', Israel was under strict command to observe them nevertheless.

We could have so much to say here, but we would rather let the Bible speak for itself; one can hardly do better than the Scriptures. Here are three chapters from the book of Hebrews. See how wonderfully its author (most likely Apostle Paul) handled these issues.

(Please note: most of our biblical quotations come from the New King James version of the Bible. In this version, when the Old Testament is quoted in the New, it is always in capital letters so as to make a distinction. Consequently, capital letter passages in our quotes come from the original. However, the emphasis on bold letters, underlining, and italic letters are ours).

Heb 8:1 Now *this* is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,
Heb 8:2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

Heb 8:3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is necessary* that this One also have something to offer.
 Heb 8:4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law;
 Heb 8:5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "SEE THAT YOU MAKE ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN."
 Heb 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.
 Heb 8:7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.
 Heb 8:8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "BEHOLD, THE DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL MAKE A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH—
 Heb 8:9 NOT ACCORDING TO THE COVENANT THAT I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS IN THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; BECAUSE THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DISREGARDED THEM, SAYS THE LORD.
 Heb 8:10 FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS IN THEIR MIND AND WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.
 Heb 8:11 NONE OF THEM SHALL TEACH HIS NEIGHBOR, AND NONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL SHALL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST OF THEM TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.
 Heb 8:12 FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."
 Heb 8:13 In that He says, "A NEW COVENANT," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

 Heb 9:1 Then indeed, even the first *covenant* had ordinances of divine service and the earthly Heb 9:2 sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in which *was* the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind Heb 9:3 the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, Heb 9:4 which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which *were* the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant;
 Heb 9:5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.
 Heb 9:6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing *the services*.
 Heb 9:7 But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance;
 Heb 9:8 the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.
 Heb 9:9 It *was* symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—
 Heb 9:10 concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and **fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation**.
 Heb 9:11 But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.
 Heb 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.
 Heb 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,
 Heb 9:14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living

Heb 9:15 God? And for this reason **He is the Mediator of the new covenant**, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that **those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance**.
 Heb 9:16 For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the
 Heb 9:17 testator. For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.
 Heb 9:18 Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood.
 Heb 9:19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,
 Heb 9:20 saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD HAS COMMANDED YOU."
 Heb 9:21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the
 Heb 9:22 ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.
 Heb 9:23 Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.
 Heb 9:24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;
 Heb 9:25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—
 Heb 9:26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.
 Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
 Heb 9:28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

 Heb 10:1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.
 Heb 10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. [*Notice carefully, it was the law of sacrifices that has ceased, not the Ten Commandments. G.S.*]
 Heb 10:3 But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year.
 Heb 10:4 For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.
 Heb 10:5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU DID NOT DESIRE, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME.
 Heb 10:6 IN BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES FOR SIN YOU HAD NO PLEASURE.
 Heb 10:7 THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME— IN THE VOLUME OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME— TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.' "
 Heb 10:8 Previously saying, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING, BURNT OFFERINGS, AND OFFERINGS FOR SIN YOU DID NOT DESIRE, NOR HAD PLEASURE IN THEM" (which are offered according to the law),
 Heb 10:9 then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD." He takes away the first that He may establish the second.
 Heb 10:10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus
 Heb 10:11 Christ once *for all*. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.
 Heb 10:12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,
 Heb 10:13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.
 Heb 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.
 Heb 10:15 But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,
 Heb 10:16 "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR HEARTS, AND IN THEIR MINDS I WILL WRITE THEM," [*Now why does God put His Law in our hearts if not to obey it? And which Law does He put in our hearts? Not the Law of sacrifices, but the holy Law of the Ten Commandments that prepares people for God's grace. G.S.*].

Heb 10:17 then He adds, "THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."

Heb 10:18 Now where there is remission of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin.

Heb 10:19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

Heb 10:20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is,

Heb 10:21 His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God,

Heb 10:22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.

Heb 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

Heb 10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Heb 10:26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Heb 10:27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which

Heb 10:28 will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Heb 10:29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Heb 10:30 For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."

Heb 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Heb 10:32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:

Heb 10:33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;

Heb 10:34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves

Heb 10:35 in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

Heb 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

Heb 10:37 "FOR YET A LITTLE WHILE, AND HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME AND WILL NOT TARRY.

Heb 10:38 NOW THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; BUT IF ANYONE DRAWS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM."

Heb 10:39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Now, even if I have to repeat myself a thousand times, here are the words of Jesus Christ, both from here on earth and from heaven.

Joh 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

Joh 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide

Joh 14:17 with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Rev 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

The Commandments, the Passover and the Holy Days of God are synonymous with the faith and Gospel of Jesus Christ. Without these, no one will ever be saved.

A Great Christian World or a Great Falling Away

If one were to judge this world by the number of people who profess to be Christians he would conclude that the world is in good hands. But if he judged it by the number of people who believe the Gospel according to the Scriptures, he would conclude that the word is in big trouble.

What does it matter if the world is not following the Scriptures one hundred per cent, someone may say; as long as they believe in Christ they are saved. Does not the Bible say that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (Joh 3:16).

Yes, the Bible does say that, but it also says this:

Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Mat 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

Mat 7:23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

It is not enough to believe in Christ, cast out demons in His name, and do miracles in His name. One must do the will of the Father in heaven, and His will is not found in just one sentence; His will is in the entire Bible. However, one does not need to know the entire Bible in order to qualify for eternal life. There are two aspects to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The first one presents us with a simple message. This is what Jesus Christ told a young man.

Mat 19:16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

Mat 19:17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

Mat 19:18 He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, " 'YOU SHALL NOT MURDER,' 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,' 'YOU SHALL NOT STEAL,' 'YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS,'

Mat 19:19 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER,' and, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' "

Mat 19:20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

Mat 19:21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Mat 19:22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Mat 19:23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 19:24 And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Mat 19:25 When His disciples heard *it*, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

Mat 19:26 But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

If you want to enter into life, keep the Commandments. The young man could have said, what do you mean 'enter into life', am I not alive now? Jesus Christ could have

quoted Scriptures which tell us that this world is merely God's workshop, like a potter's workshop, in which He is preparing human beings for His eternal Kingdom (Isa 29:16; 45:9-13).

But the young man asked instead, 'which Commandments?' Jesus listed six of the Ten Commandments that God gave Moses in Mount Horeb. He left out the first four, because He knew that the Jews were, on the whole, observing these.

Jesus Christ told something else to the young man which reflects the problem rich men have when it comes to salvation. "Sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." What do you think the preachers of today would tell the young man? To sell what you have and give to the poor? Far from it! More likely they would say, sell what you have and give to the church, then follow us.

Jesus' message of salvation could not be any simpler. If you want to gain eternal life, keep the Commandments. One does not need to be highly educated to understand this message. Indeed, one hardly needs to be educated at all to be a candidate for salvation.

Many of the people who formed the early Churches of God were, in most likelihood, illiterates. They did not have a national education system that required every child to attend school up to a certain age as we have these days. They learned letters from parents, brothers and sisters, or if they could afford it, from private tutors. Those who started attending church meetings could have learned from their church fellows. All we know for sure is that the apostles enjoined the disciples to study the Bible to make themselves approved before God.

2Ti 2:10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

2Ti 2:11 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with *Him*, We shall also live with *Him*.

2Ti 2:12 If we endure, We shall also reign with *Him*. If we deny *Him*, He also will deny us.

2Ti 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

2Ti 2:14 Remind *them* of these things, charging *them* before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.

2Ti 2:15 **Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

One cannot obtain that kind of education in the educational institutions of today. If they ever study the Bible, they do it not to discover the truth of God, but to dissect it, to find out who said what and when, and who borrowed from whom – things that have nothing to do with God's message. The Holy Spirit has no role in the august educational institutions of our time. This is why the world is perishing.

The second aspect of Jesus' message is reflected in a discussion He had with a Pharisee.

Joh 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

Joh 3:2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Joh 3:4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Joh 3:7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

Joh 3:8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
 Joh 3:9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"
 Joh 3:10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"
 Joh 3:11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.
 Joh 3:12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

Jesus Christ did not expect the young man to know or understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but He expected it of the Pharisee. Why? Because the Pharisee was a teacher of Israel, and from teachers and preachers a lot more is expected. This is why if one is not sufficiently proficient in the Scriptures, he should not take it upon himself to teach others, for both will end up on the road to perdition. This is what the apostles taught.

1Ti 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,
 1Ti 1:2 To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.
 1Ti 1:3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine,
 1Ti 1:4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.
 1Ti 1:5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith,
 1Ti 1:6 **from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk,**
 1Ti 1:7 **desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.**
 1Pe 4:17 For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Ancient Israel paid a heavy price for departing from the standards of their God. But God is patient and willing to receive back those who repent and amend their ways. This is how Hezekiah, one of Israel's better Kings, resolved this problem.

2Ch 30:1 And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel.
 2Ch 30:2 For the king and his leaders and all the assembly in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month.
 2Ch 30:3 For they could not keep it at the regular time, because a sufficient number of priests had not consecrated themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem.
 2Ch 30:4 And the matter pleased the king and all the assembly.
 2Ch 30:5 So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done *it* for a long *time* in the *prescribed* manner.
 2Ch 30:6 Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the command of the king:
"Children of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and

Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria.

- 2Ch 30:7 And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to desolation, as you see.
- 2Ch 30:8 Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers *were*, *but* yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you.
- 2Ch 30:9 For **if you return to the LORD**, your brethren and your children *will be treated* with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the LORD your **God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him.**"

Hezekiah linked their return to God with keeping of the Passover. It may surprise people to know this but observance of the Passover is a condition of being right with God and Jesus Christ in the New Testament too.

- 1Co 11:17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you*, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.
- 1Co 11:18 For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.
- 1Co 11:19 For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.
- 1Co 11:20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.
- 1Co 11:21 For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk.
- 1Co 11:22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.
- 1Co 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread;
- 1Co 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."
- 1Co 11:25 In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."
- 1Co 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.
- 1Co 11:27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.
- 1Co 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
- 1Co 11:29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.
- 1Co 11:30 For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

How many Christians keep the Passover in the manner commanded by Jesus Christ? Most of them do not even know the meaning of Passover, let alone observe it properly.

Jesus Christ referred to His followers as a 'little flock.' Now do you know of any church to which this epithet could be applied? Today's preachers make a virtue out of making their church bigger and bigger, rather than being obedient to God and Jesus Christ.

Jesus told His little flock that He will be with them to the end of the world. He did not say that His little flock would become a huge flock by the time of the end.

When the Bible speaks of a huge religious organization, it refers to it as Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots (Rev 17). And what does this Mother of Harlots do to the little flock of Jesus Christ? It deceives them, persecutes them, or murders them! And it does it all in the assumed name of Jesus Christ.

Joh 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.

Because Jesus Christ used the term 'synagogue', people assume that this happened only in the early days of Christianity from the Jews. They forget what Catholic inquisition did to those who dared possess and read the Bible for themselves.

Unlike other religions, Christianity has to contend with false prophets whose role is to lead people away from the truth of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rather than lead them to salvation. And why would they do that? Because they serve not the true God but a false one, not Jesus Christ the Lord of light, but Satan the lord of darkness.

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

Mat 8:12 But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

2Co 11:12 But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.

2Co 11:13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

2Co 11:14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

2Co 11:15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Rom 16:18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Php 3:18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:

Php 3:19 whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

Jesus Christ and the apostles never tired warning the disciples against deceivers. This is what Jesus Christ had to say.

Mat 24:24 For **false christs and false prophets will rise and** show great signs and wonders to **deceive, if possible, even the elect.**

Mat 24:25 See, I have told you beforehand.

And this is what Apostle Paul said.

2Ti 3:1 But know this, that **in the last days** perilous times will come:

2Ti 3:2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

2Ti 3:3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

2Ti 3:4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

2Ti 3:5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

2Ti 3:6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts,
 2Ti 3:7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.
 2Ti 3:8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith;
 2Ti 3:9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.
 2Ti 3:10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,
 2Ti 3:11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.
 2Ti 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.
 2Ti 3:13 But **evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

And here is Apostle Peter.

2Pe 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.
 2Pe 2:2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.
 2Pe 2:3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.
 2Pe 2:4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;
 2Pe 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;
 2Pe 2:6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;
 2Pe 2:7 and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked
 2Pe 2:8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)—
 2Pe 2:9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,
 2Pe 2:10 and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. *They are* presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries,
 2Pe 2:11 whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.
 2Pe 2:12 But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption,
 2Pe 2:13 *and* will receive the wages of unrighteousness, *as* those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. *They are* spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you,
 2Pe 2:14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. *They have* a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children.
 2Pe 2:15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;
 2Pe 2:16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

2Pe 2:17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

2Pe 2:18 For when they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.

2Pe 2:19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

2Pe 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

2Pe 2:21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

2Pe 2:22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A DOG RETURNS TO HIS OWN VOMIT," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

And Apostle John:

3Jn 1:1 The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:

3Jn 1:2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

3Jn 1:3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth.

3Jn 1:4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

3Jn 1:5 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers,

3Jn 1:6 who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If* you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well,

3Jn 1:7 because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.

3Jn 1:8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

3Jn 1:9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.

3Jn 1:10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.

3Jn 1:11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

3Jn 1:12 Demetrius has a *good* testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

3Jn 1:13 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink;

3Jn 1:14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

Now consider this: if they did such things to Apostle John, the youngest of the apostles and the one Jesus Christ loved the most, before the ink was even dry on the epistles that formed the New Testament, what would be the condition of the Churches of God by now?

Apostle Paul gave us the answer.

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

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

2Th 2:3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

2Th 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

2Th 2:5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

2Th 2:6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

2Th 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way.

2Th 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

2Th 2:9 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

2Th 2:10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

2Th 2:11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

2Th 2:12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Jesus Christ does not return before a great falling away took place and the man of sin is revealed. Who is this man of sin? This question has preoccupied theologians for millennia. We can do no better now than to quote an article published in an earlier edition of *TCH*.

"Garner Ted Armstrong said that the "man of sin" will be sitting in the holy place, in a temple of God which is yet to be built in Jerusalem. He based his prophecy on Apostle Paul's letter to the Thessalonian Church. Here is a quotation from his booklet (p.20), with his comments interspersed in square brackets.

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come [the second coming of Christ], except there come a falling away [apostasy!] first, and that the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposed and exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God [a temple which is yet to be constructed in Jerusalem!], showing himself [claiming] that he is God...

And now ye know what withholdeth [withstands; resists. Paul is speaking of himself, as one who was "holding back" this growing apostasy] that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity [it was a "mystery" religion; one which condoned sin, or " iniquity"] doth already work; only he who now letteth [restrain] will let [continue to restrain], until he be taken out of the way." (II Thess. 2:3-7).

Then he continued:

"Here we see a human religious leader who will ensconce himself inside the temple in Jerusalem and actually claim to be divine! - claim to be god!" (pp. 20 -21).

And again:

"Paul clearly said the 'man of sin' would sit in the temple of God. But today, there is no temple in Jerusalem." (p. 27).

There is no better example of unfounded assumptions being read into the Scriptures than this one. Apostle Paul never said that the "man of sin" would sit in the temple of God, but that he was ALREADY SITTING in that temple when he wrote his epistle.

Neither did he mention Jerusalem as the city of the temple of God. That is a very important biblical passage, which requires an in-depth analysis. For this reason, we will quote it again in its entirety from the New King James Version:

- 2Th 2:1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,
2Th 2:2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.
2Th 2:3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,
2Th 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.
2Th 2:5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?
2Th 2:6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.
2Th 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way.
2Th 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.
2Th 2:9 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,
2Th 2:10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
2Th 2:11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,
2Th 2:12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

There are several important points in this passage that need to be remembered:

- * There will be a great falling away from the truth of God before the return of Jesus Christ (v.3);
- * The "man of sin" and "son of perdition," will be revealed before the return of Jesus Christ (v.3);
- * He was already sitting in the Temple of God claiming to be God when Apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Thessalonians (v.4);
- * The "mystery of lawlessness" was already at work (v.7);
- * The position which this man was holding will be in existence when Jesus Christ returns (v.8);
- * The "man of sin" has the power of Satan behind him (v.9);
- * Those who follow him will perish, "because they did not receive the love of the truth" (v.10);
- * There was a certain lie which this man was preaching at that time (v.11).

The first question to be answered is where was the temple of God in which this "man of sin" was sitting? Instinctively, people think that it was in Jerusalem, but this cannot be true for a number of reasons:

1) The Jews did not worship any human being who claimed to be God. Had they not just killed Jesus Christ for saying that He was the Son of God? How much less would they have worshiped someone who claimed to be not the Son, but the very God Himself?

2) There are no historical or religious documents speaking of a human being who ensconced himself in the temple of God in Jerusalem claiming to be God, between the time of Jesus Christ and the time the temple was destroyed in 70 AD. If that had been the case it would, most certainly, have been mentioned by the Apostles or by the historians of that period, but no such mention was ever made.

3) Why was Apostle Paul afraid to name this "man of sin" in his letter? "Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?" If he had been a Jew he would have had no hesitation telling the churches who he was, for he openly blasted those people who caused problems to the Churches of God. But whoever this man was, he was a feared person.

The reason he could not be mentioned was that the letter could have fallen into the wrong hands. Now, who were the people who were feared by both the Jews and the Thessalonians at that time? The Romans, of course!

The Romans were masters of the ancient world and they did not take kindly to anyone who spoke disparagingly about them and especially about their leaders. It is in Rome, therefore, that we must look for the "man of sin" who sat in the temple of God claiming to be God.

It is a great error to assume that Jerusalem was the only city in the world in which there was a temple of God. It is true that only the temple in Jerusalem was sanctified by God, but that does not mean that there were no temples of God in other cities. Virtually every ancient city had a temple dedicated to God or to some other deity.

With this in mind, let us now compare what Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans with what he wrote to the Thessalonians.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notice the similarities between the two epistles:

- * The people mentioned in both of them take delight in unrighteousness.
- * They both reject the love and the truth of God.
- * Both worshipped what they ought not to.
- * Both were given by God to strong delusions and passions.
- * Both believed the lie.
- * And both did things that were Satanic in nature, even though Satan was mentioned by name only in the letter to the Thessalonians.

It is obvious that in both epistles Apostle Paul was speaking about the same people. Since we know that the first were Romans, it follows that the second were

Romans too. We should not be surprised then if we find that the "man of sin" was a high standing Roman.

The Romans, more than any other people, were infatuated with images of "four-footed beasts and creeping things" and have remained so ever since, as any visitor to Italy would confirm this. That is why we must look for the "man of sin" not among the Jews, who to this day have observed God's injunction against making and worshipping images and statues (Ex. 20:4-5), but among the Romans who take pleasure in such things.

In the book of Acts we find that when Apostle Paul visited Athens, "his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols" (Acts 17:16). If he was so "provoked" by the idols of Athens, we can hardly imagine that there could have been such idols in Jerusalem. No such complaint was made by any of the Apostles against the Jews. Athens, however, could not have been the city of the "man of sin" because the Greeks had no dominion over the Jews and, after this episode, Athens played little role in the life of the early Christians, whereas Rome played a mighty and murderous one.

We notice that Apostle Paul made no comment about his "spirit being provoked within himself" when he visited Rome, even though that city was given over to idols more than Athens was. The Romans had the habit of carting anything of value from the conquered territories to their capital, and monuments, artifacts and idols were of high value to them.

The reason Apostle Paul said nothing about the Romans was that he knew when to keep his mouth shut. He knew that he would not have received the same reception in Rome as he did in Athens. The Romans were too busy with their murderous pleasure games to have time for philosophical discussions as did the Athenians in the Areopagus (Acts 17).

It is fashionable these days to think of the Romans as a civilization far advanced for their time, and in many respects they were. But we must never forget how the "Pax Romana" was achieved. Only the Romans were capable of decorating their roads with impaled human beings, left to die a slow agonizing death; or use them as torches for their night carnivals; or make a spectacle of them being torn apart by animals; or watch them fighting gladiatorial games till death.

It was the Roman predilection for the macabre that provided a fertile ground for the murderous Catholic inquisition later on. Can anyone imagine such "sports" being practiced openly these days in any country of the world?

The Romans were tolerant of other peoples' religions as long as they acknowledged the supremacy of the Roman gods. But the Jews and the Christians refused to do so, and paid heavily for their attitude.

As happened throughout history, the religion of the dominant civilization influenced that of the conquered peoples. We should not be surprised then, that the Roman religion exercised a powerful influence over other religions of the empire, including Christianity. Apostle Paul saw that occurring already during his time, and warned his followers to be on guard against it.

It is from Rome that he saw "the mystery of lawlessness already at work". It is there that he saw the man who came "according to the working of Satan". It is from there that he saw the lie being spread over the conquered nations.

Who then was the "man of sin" who had authority over religious matters, who sat in the temple of God claiming to be God? Was he the emperor? No! It could not have been the emperor for a number of reasons:

- First, not all emperors received divine honors. Caesar and Augustus were deified after they died; Tiberius disapproved of the cult of emperor worship; Caligula demanded to be worshipped while alive and was murdered; Claudius I, the ruling emperor when Apostle Paul wrote his epistles to the Thessalonians, suffered from a speech impediment and was despised by the Senate.

You may have seen the British television series "I Claudius" which dealt with that period. Claudius was depicted as a bumbling, stuttering individual, always outwitted by his wives. Did he look as if he might have been the man who was worshipped as God?

The film producers were not particularly concerned with historical accuracy, for the records show that he was in fact one of the better and more sensible of the Roman emperors. He improved the administration and the judicial system over the empire and was generous with Roman citizenship, but because he was held in low esteem by the disgruntled senators, he did not receive divine honors even after death, let alone while alive. Neither was it Nero, the next emperor and the one in whose reign Apostle Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans. Under Nero, the Christians suffered their first major persecution, but that not because he demanded divine honors, but because he needed scapegoats for the fire which destroyed Rome.

Emperor worship was not a common practice until much later. Domitian, Trajan and Hadrian were the first emperors who persecuted the Christians for that reason, and that was after the Apostles had disappeared from the scene.

- Second, even when some emperors received divine honors, there is no evidence that any of them actually sat on the throne in the temple of God claiming to be God.

- Third, the Scriptures say that the "man of sin" will be destroyed at the return of Jesus Christ. Since no man could have survived that long, it means that the Scriptures are referring not to an individual, but to a position or office. Since the position of emperorship disappeared with the disintegration of the Roman Empire, it follows that the emperor could not have been the "man of sin."

The only position in the Roman world which was held in high esteem then, which rivaled that of the emperor, and which has survived to this day, is that of Pontifex Maximus.

Armstrong's idea that Apostle Paul was putting some restraints on Pontifex Maximus and keeping him from being revealed (2 Thess. 4:6-8), is as spurious as the one that he was a Jew. It was the emperor who overshadowed and kept in check the power of Pontifex Maximus, but when the emperors were no longer on the scene, Pontifex Maximus became the undisputed leader of the Roman world, and still is to this day.

The position of Pontifex Maximus goes as far back in Roman history as there are recorded documents. Indeed, the earliest chronicles of Roman history, dealing with events of religious significance (famines, eclipses, etc.), called "Annales Pontificum," were written by Pontifex Maximus. As the chief priest of the Roman religion, he presided over religious ceremonies in the temple of God, served by a group of girls called the Vestal Virgins.

The story is that when the Romans abolished their monarchy and instituted a Republic, late in the sixth century BC, they still needed a king for religious ceremonies. So they bestowed the title of "Rex Sacrificulum" (King of Sacrifices), and "Rex Sacrorum" (Sacred or Divine King) upon Pontifex Maximus.

But there was another title of which Pontifex Maximus was very fond of: "Father of the nation". It is not clear how he obtained that title, but since the Romans believed that he came down from the gods, it is not hard to see why he felt that he was the "Father of the nation".

When you combine the titles, "Divine King" with "Father of the nation" you come up with "Divine Father", a title which belongs to God and to Him alone. Can you see now why Apostle Paul spoke of a "man of sin" sitting in the temple of God claiming to be God?

During the Republic, the legislative power was held by the Senate, the executive power by the two praetors, later consuls, but the religious power with all its accoutrements and honors was held by Pontifex Maximus.

When Julius Caesar became the undisputed leader in Rome, he acquired for himself the title of Pontifex Maximus. He felt that he was entitled to it because his genealogy reached back to the Trojan hero Aeneas, the founder of Lavinium - the parent city of Rome - and through him to the goddess Venus. But other Roman senators were not happy that he declared himself "Sacred King", and fearing that he intended to re-establish the monarchy they killed him. Unfortunately, what they feared in Julius Caesar they got in Octavian Augustus.

Augustus, who is considered to be the first Roman emperor, also acquired for himself the title of Pontifex Maximus. After him, that title passed on to all Roman emperors, but for them it was only an honorific title; the real function and religious authority remained with the chief Roman priest who continued to sit in the temple of God as "Divine Father" surrounded by the Vestal Virgins.

There is a similarity here between the Roman imperial system and the present arrangement in the Anglican Church. Nominally, the Queen of Great Britain is also head of the Anglican Church, but the religious authority and functions lie with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

After the Roman Empire disintegrated, the title 'Pontifex Maximus' remained the sole preserve of the chief Roman priest." (*The Christian Herald* No 3, p.23ff)

This resolves the question of the identity of the 'man of sin' and the 'beast' of Revelation. They are one and the same. The question is why does he rebel against Christ? And the answer has to be because the religion of Pontifex Maximus is predicated on the notion that Rome is an eternal city, and the return of Jesus Christ will put an end to that. The world is being led to believe that it is fighting an 'Alien' that comes to destroy the earth.

Of course, the real power behind this is Satan. Remember what Apostle Paul said.

2Th 2:9 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

2Th 2:10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Why is Satan so vehemently opposed to the returning Christ? Because it will be the end of his reign upon this world! Here is further proof that Satan is in control of this world.

Eph 2:1 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

Eph 2:2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, **according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,**

Eph 2:3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Eph 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, **that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against **the rulers of the darkness of this age**, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

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

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

And here is proof of the end of Satan's reign.

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The question that needs to be answered now is how far we are from these end time developments. When Jesus' disciples asked Him that question, this is what He told them.

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

Preaching the Gospel as a witness to all the nations is the sign that the end is upon us. This would have been close to impossible before the Internet, but now that Gospel has been going out to all nations for years. The question is why did Jesus Christ say that the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to all the nations **as a witness**, and not as a means of calling them to repentance and salvation? Because Satan's ministers would have done their job too well, and no one believes that Gospel anymore! This explains why the witness is not being done by churches, but by two lone individuals, just as prophecies have foretold long ago.

One last point: Biblical scholars have come to understand that the Bible contains a code according to which this world has been set up to last seven thousand years and no more. However, at the end of six thousand years and the beginning of the seventh thousand years, the world undergoes a radical change that will reshape the face of the earth. That is the Great Tribulation that Jesus Christ spoke about.

According to biblical chronology, we are now at, or about, six thousand years since creation. You can draw your own conclusion as to what that means. That is if you believe the Bible, but if you believe evolutionary fallacies, you can go about unperturbed by such developments. We cannot change the minds of those who have closed them to the truth of God, but we can say this: a decade from now there will not be a single person in the world who believes in evolution, and everyone in the world will bend their knees and bow their head before God Almighty and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Newsletter

We have had requests from people to make our *Newsletters* available for them too. Consequently, until we make a different arrangement, we have decided to publish each *Newsletter* in the next edition of *The Christian Herald*. Here now is *Newsletter 23*.



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

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Newsletter 23 (10/11)

Friends and Leaders Around the World, Greetings Again

Have you considered why the Christian world is in such turmoil? They have eradicated diseases, prolonged human life, brought the world to our living rooms, taken humans to the moon, yet they have not learned how to govern themselves. After glorifying greed for so long, they are now discovering that greed is not good after all. Two decades ago, in the very first edition of *The Christian Herald*, we wrote:

“The United States of America has become the most, morally and spiritually, polluted land on earth. They glorify homosexuality, bestiality, satanism, adultery, teenage promiscuity, crime, theft, and blasphemies, in movies that are then exported to every corner of the world. Everything God condemns in the Bible, they do and encourage others to do too. And now the children, the last frontier as it is, have to be corrupted and infested with these unspeakable abominations through the insidious use of modern technology. And as if it is not enough to do it to their own people, they are forcing other nations to adopt their norms and lifestyle too. These days, in order to be in the good grace of the USA, you must allow your people the same kind of “freedoms” that they allow to their people, otherwise you are not a good friend.

For centuries, the U.S.A. and the British Commonwealth have been the beneficiaries of the greatest of God's blessings. These countries have well and truly been “flowing with milk and honey”, a promise God made to those nations that obey His voice and keep His Commandments. Until recent times, they seemed to be good examples to the world, with a work ethic and spiritual values that were worthy of emulation. Their pioneers gave us the term, “Puritan work ethic”, and zealously tried to make the Word of God the foundation of their living.

These nations also produced and exported most of the Bibles of this world, and were always ready to help others less fortunate who fell on hard times. But what has happened to them lately is nothing short of astonishing. They have fallen into a deep morass from which there seems to be no way out. Their obsessive emphasis on personal freedoms and "human rights" is threatening the very fabric of their societies. Freedom without responsibility, without decency, without God, is no freedom at all; it is enslavement to one's uncontrolled passions and desires, and to Satan's clever devices and deceptions.

The Bible, the unshakable Word of God, has preserved for us the example of those nations that had defiled themselves with the kind of pollutions that are now rampant in the western world, and especially in the USA. God made it clear that there is a heavy penalty for such depravity, even to the point of national annihilation (. . .)

Can President Bush (senior) see now where his nation's truly vital interest lies? Does he realize the danger in which he finds himself, and the catastrophe that is about to engulf his nation and the world? If he does, he ought to take quick measures to rectify it, for the conditions are all set for the most spectacular fall in the history of the world. That this coincides with the fast approaching Great Tribulation that will change the face of the earth, should make it that much more obvious that the nations of this world in general, and the U.S.A. in particular, are about to face the truth and consequences of their way of life."

Then, in the second edition of *The Christian Herald*, we wrote:

"People believe that communism failed. Communism never failed, atheism did! Communism never failed because it has never been tried. What they practiced in the Soviet Union and its satellite nations was not communism but a parody of it. It is a satanic ploy to undermine every good idea that comes from the Bible. True communism will work in the Kingdom of God.

Soviet communism has failed, but so has American capitalism. Such is the vulgarity of capitalism that at a time when a company like General Motors is closing down dozens of factories and laying off thousands of people, it grants its retiring Chairman an annual pension of \$US1.2 million. The Chairman of Chrysler, who has an allocated salary of \$4.5 millions, went to Japan with President Bush to lecture the Japanese on work ethics. When it was pointed out to him that the Chairman of Toyota, a much more successful company, earns a fifth of his salary, he stormed out of the meeting and left Japan indignant.

No social conscience on the part of those who clamber their way to the top. No Christian concern for one's fellow human beings from the leading citizens of the, supposedly, number one Christian nation on earth. Has no one ever told these people that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God" (Mat.19:24). Even at the retiring age they still do not think of the purpose of life and what lies beyond this temporary existence.

Where are the spiritual leaders of that nation? What have they achieved? Why are they silent in the face of such blatant greed and exploitation? Or are they part of the same mentality?

The country wonders why its economy is faltering so badly. Unfettered capitalism is just as unchristian as totalitarian communism. Soviet communism has collapsed; now watch for the collapse of capitalism. Those who believe that

the USA will once again dominate the world, or that Great Britain will rule the waves as during the height of its empire, have some surprises coming their way.”

Ever since we published those editions, things have been going downhill exactly how we predicted. Now we have just published *The Christian Herald No 24* in which we show how nations and empires sow the seeds of their own fall – not for the reasons that you would find in history books.

The ‘experts’ have had their say about why things have been going from bad to worse; now hear what God has to say about it. Truly, the world is on the brink.

The Christian Herald editions are freely available on this web site:

www.thechristianherald.info.

Here are some of the articles you will find in the latest edition.

- How Did It Ever Come To This?
- How nations and empires sow the seeds of their own fall:
 - . The Fall of Egypt;
 - . The Fall of Canaan;
 - . The Fall of Greece;
 - . The Fall of Rome;
 - . The Fall of America;
 - . The Fall of Judah;
- How Jewish ‘Queen of Heaven’ became Catholic ‘Queen of Heaven’;
- When Jews and Catholics find common ground, prepare to meet your Maker;
- ‘Daniel’s Last Great Mysteries Unveiled.’

In the service of Jesus Christ.

Grigore Sbarcea,

Coordinator A.O.C.F.

Post Scriptum (12/11)

The above newsletter has been sent out to world leaders and to thousands other people. This time, however, we are sending it to Australian Members of Parliament, Senators, and selected recipients.

Please do not burden this country with the abominable sin of homosexuality, for the country will not be spared the fate of those who have taken this path. Do not challenge God, for you, your family, the people you represent, and the people of Australia will not forgive you for the catastrophe you will bring upon this nation.

This is not the time to sink further into the morass of sin that God hates the most [*Not that it is ever a good time to do so*].

The world is already in the preceding stages to the Great Tribulation of which Jesus Christ said will reduce the world's population to a trickle. Watch out for developments in Russia. Vladimir Putin is the man of destiny; he is already working hard to put together the end time coalition that will come against Israel and trigger a worldwide nuclear war. [*Of course, he does not know that he is fulfilling an important end time prophecy*]. For years, he has tried to create a breach between the Anglo-Saxons and their European allies. Britain’s refusal to join European nations in stricter budgetary rules and more fiscal integration across the euro-zone, and America’s refusal to contribute to the EU bailout fund have achieved that. The proverbial “Jacob’s trouble” is reaching its climax now.

God has chosen Australia as the base from which to send out His messages to the world. Many people take credit for the good fortune of this country, but they should never forget that it is God who determines the destiny of nations. He does it on the basis of how they honour and obey Him. So if you want to please him, and gain credit in heaven, join us in the faith of Jesus Christ, and be part of this little known, yet vital end-time work. With the love of God! G. S.

THE CHRISTIAN HOLY DAYS FOR THE YEARS 2012 - 2014

	2012	2013	2014
The Passover (Pesach – Nissan 14) Unlike the Jews, who used to kill the Passover lamb “at the twilight” of Nissan 14 (meaning in the evening towards Nissan 15), we, Christians, observe the Passover when our “Lamb” – Jesus Christ – was sacrificed. That happened on the afternoon of Nissan 14, before the twilight of Nissan 14, meaning that we keep it a little earlier than the Jews. We commemorate His death, not His supper, which occurred the previous evening, as some churches do; the time when His body was broken, not when He broke the symbolic bread.	6 April	25 March	14 April
Days of Unleavened Bread (Nissan 15 – 21) On the first and seventh days there shall be holy convocations. No customary work shall be done on these days.	7 April – 13 April	26 Mar. - 1 April	15 April - 21 April
Pentecost (Shavuot – Sivan 6)	27 May	15 May	4 June
Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah – Tishri 1)	17 Sept.	5 Sept.	25 Sept.
Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur – Tishri 10)	26 Sept.	14 Sept.	4 Oct
Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth – Tishri 15 – 22) On the first and the eighth days there shall be holy convocations. No customary work shall be done on these days.	1 Oct. – 8 Oct.	19 Oct. – 26 Oct.	9 Oct. - 16 Oct.

State of the World

Society and Culture

Bindi Irwin launches war on overpopulation

Bindi Irwin says she is determined to spread the word about the perils of overpopulation. [She] is no longer the little girl we all remember. In fact, at 14 she is all grown up and on a mission to change the world. The elder child of "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin has dedicated herself to wildlife conservation since her father's death in 2006.

Now, the teenage star is turning her attention to the issue of overpopulation, and she's showing has no shortage of vision and enthusiasm. "The older I get, the more I want to tackle the issues people don't want to talk about," she told AAP today. "I've been working a lot with Dick Smith on overpopulation. Our human population continues to expand at such a scary rate - it's unbelievable.

"With fewer resources to share around more people, how can the poor have improved lifestyles?" Last month, an essay on overpopulation Bindi was asked to write for then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was drastically edited by American authorities. The edit prompted the young Queenslander to write to Ms Clinton's office asking,

"What happened to freedom of speech?'. Bindi insisted the edited version not be published on Ms Clinton's e-journal. Despite the setback, Bindi remains determined to spread the word about the perils of overpopulation.

"What I'm trying to do is to get the message across. If we can at least start discussing this issue, maybe we could create some positive change, because if we don't start talking about it, we're not going to get anywhere.

"The issue can be quite daunting because it's so huge, but I think it's one of those things that you need to just chip away at and never give up." Despite being in the public eye her whole life, Bindi insists she feels no pressures to live up to any expectations. "I don't really feel like there are any pressures because I'm able to help others - and that's what life is really all about. "If I am able to pass on what I've learnt in my life, that's really wonderful, especially after losing Dad." Bindi says she still gets to do most of the things other teenagers do. "I have friends who come to Australia Zoo, and it's just instead of playing video games, we get to hug and kiss a giraffe, or walk a tiger.

"It's really special. "I think you have to remember the difference between 'normal' and 'common'. "My life is certainly not common, but I think of myself as ... a 'normal' teenager." She is, however, going to "wait" when it comes to going out with boys - she has bigger issues to tackle first. "I'd like to continue to spread my message on conservation and make sure my dad's message - his legacy - lives on," she said. (AAP/The Telegraph, Feb. 18, 2013)

Hillary Clinton tries to silence Bindi Irwin on population growth

PASSIONATE wildlife campaigner Bindi Irwin has gotten into a biff with one of the world's most powerful women. The 14-year-old has stood her ground after an essay she was invited to write for US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's e-journal was drastically edited before it was to be published.

The young conservationist, daughter of the late "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin, was asked to write 800-1000 words on why she had chosen to devote her life's work to wildlife conservation. The piece was supposed to be published in the December issue titled **Go Wild Coming Together for Conservation** as part of Secretary Clinton's endangered species initiative. But after writing exactly 1000 words urging society to address overpopulation, the former first lady's department returned it for final approval with most of it edited out.

Bindi used the simple analogy of throwing a party and having too many guests turn up to explain her point of view. "How is it possible that our fragile planet can sustain these masses of people?" Bindi wrote.

"Think of it this way. Pretend for a moment that I'm having a party, inviting 15 of my closest friends. I've rented a room big enough to fit 15 people, I've bought 15 sandwiches for each of my friends to eat, and I have put together 15 party bags, one for each friend. "My party is about to start, and I hear a knock at the door. My friends are here! Only, when I open the door, 70 of my friends are standing there wanting to come to the party!

"What do I do? My room is only big enough to fit 15, with 70 we won't have any room to move and dance. I don't have enough food. Do I divide the sandwiches among the 70 people? But then everyone will still be hungry. What about the party bags? Do I only give the party bags out to my closest friends? Isn't that unfair to everyone else?"

"That is the crisis facing mother earth today."

Terri Irwin, who is raising Bindi and her nine-year-old brother Robert at their Australia Zoo on the Sunshine Coast, said her daughter was less than impressed with the response from the US State Department. "It's interesting that she was asked to write an essay about the environment and included the consideration of population (growth) and they returned her essay edited and completely edited that out," she said. "So Bindi wrote to Hillary Clinton's organisation and said 'what happened to freedom of speech? This is my opinion and I don't want that edited out'."

The tough-talking teen – who onscreen has freed Willy, fought pirate animal poachers and hosted Bindi's Boot Camp – pulled the essay from the publication in anticipation of a response.

Hillary Clinton

Hillary Clinton's organisation edited out huge sections of an essay they asked Bindi Irwin to submit. "The edited version was not published per Bindi's request," Mrs Irwin said. "She said 'that's not what I wrote', so that's where we're at with it." Secretary Clinton's department then told Bindi there was not enough time for her to do a re-write, which the Queensland teen refused to do anyway. "Bindi just respectfully said that she's not willing to go with the edited version of the story," a zoo spokeswoman said. "She said that while it was a good message that they were trying to convey in the publication, she just wanted her whole essay to be printed rather than just a snippet of it without the other points she wanted included. "So that's how it's ended."

Mrs Irwin said Bindi, who is following in her father's footsteps in promoting nature conservation and helping preserve the planet, had become increasingly passionate about the cause in recent years. "In fact Bindi is so passionate about it that she became very interested in what Dick Smith was talking about," she said. "Dick Smith did a documentary called Population Puzzle and Bindi watched that. "Bindi became so passionate about the issue that she talked to Dick about it and helped launch his book Population Crisis and has become a real advocate."

Bindi and Terri Irwin

Terri Irwin is supporting her daughter Bindi's views on population growth. The mother-of-two said population growth was an unpopular topic. "It's astounding that in just over 100 years we've gone from 1.5 billion people on the planet to 7 billion so you think 'what do we do in the next 100 years?' We're going to be warring over water and space and food," she said. "I just think it's fascinating that when Bindi does an interview and talks about population, more than 50 per cent of the time it's edited out. "It's something we do need to talk about or the ship's going to sink man."

Mrs Irwin said she had visited communities in Australia which were in desperate need of family planning support. "Certainly when Bindi, Robert and I were in South Africa four years ago filming a movie we saw a lot of that in Africa as well. It's a global problem but we recognise it in Africa and we forget it's something that's in our own back yard," she said. "Everyone talks about recycle and manage your resources but how do you do that when we've got so many people? "It's not terribly popular but I'm not trying to insult anyone's ability to decide how many kids they want ... but I continue to meet children in foster care and people living on the poverty line who did not chose to have so many children and for who options weren't made readily available." [News.com.au](http://news.com.au) has requested a response from the US State Department. (Kristin Shorten, news.com.au, January 24, 2013)

The reality of abortion is exposed

Healthy babies deserve our protection, but we have normalised abortion to a point where we risk destroying the taboo against murder. We've made abortion such a sanitised, abstract subject, guarded by aggressive feminism, that discussion of its realities is off-limits in polite company. Even the word "abortion" is politically incorrect, replaced by the euphemism "choice", or more recently, "reproductive justice".

While societal attitudes are becoming more nuanced in the face of technological advances allowing us to see clearly inside the womb and keep premature babies alive earlier than ever, the zeal of abortion enthusiasts to shield women from the truth continues unchecked.

No nuance is reflected in the demonisation of the Catholic Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott. As health minister in the Howard government he once said Australia's high rate of abortion was "an unambiguous moral tragedy", but did nothing to change abortion law. That is the province of state governments anyway.

What he did was offer vulnerable women more choice – in the form of a Pregnancy Support Helpline – to make them aware of all the options available in the case of an unwanted pregnancy. Thus, he is enemy No.1 to the Emily's List brigade. There is no nuance, either, in the campaigns by GetUp and the Greens to liberalise state abortion laws nationwide. Nor in Tasmania's Labor-Green government's determination to introduce draconian legislation, modelled on existing Victorian law, threatening doctors, counsellors and protesters with jail and hefty fines for opposing abortion. Take, for instance,

Melbourne GP Mark Hobart, who refused to refer a woman pregnant with a female foetus for an abortion because she and her husband wanted a boy. That's choice for you.

The couple procured an abortion anyway, but Hobart says he broke the law by refusing the referral and risks being suspended or deregistered. Since the story broke in this newspaper, commentary on the case has sought to dismiss Hobart as a political partisan because he is a member of the pro-life Democratic Labor Party.

But how does the revelation of his pro-life belief excuse the practice of sex selection abortion?

Perhaps it just means he is more attuned to the moral problems involved and less influenced by our collective denial of reality. Every now and then, a story arrives to expose the unpalatable truth about abortion, that it is not just a medical procedure to remove tissue, but entails the death of a small helpless human.

The Kermit Gosnell trial winding up in the US does so with horrendous clarity.

Gosnell is the Philadelphia abortion doctor charged with murdering four babies who were born alive while being aborted and over the death of a woman allegedly administered too much anaesthetic during an abortion.

The clinic he operated for 30 years has been described as a "house of horrors", piled high with body parts.

One former staffer testified: "It would rain foetuses." Another testified about the sound of a baby screaming after it was born alive. "I can't describe it. It sounded like a little alien." Some pregnancies were as advanced as 30 weeks, and some aborted babies lived for as long as 20 minutes. One boy was so big Gosnell joked he could "walk me to the bus stop". The detail is complete with colour photographs of perfect, chubby, fully formed dead babies, whose bodies were found by police on a routine prescription drug bust.

The horrors of the Gosnell case are so inescapably graphic that even half a world away people are paying attention. There is little room for abstract arguments when you are confronted with jars of severed babies' feet.

Of course, local abortion enthusiasts have been busy claiming the case is an aberration, that it proves the need for less regulation of abortion and that blame belongs with abortion protesters.

The Gosnell case offends them because it renders absurd their contention that abortion is just another medical procedure, without a moral dimension. And the fact is that babies do survive late-term abortion, even in Australia, although few hit the headlines. There was the case of baby Jessica Jane, aborted at 22 weeks in Darwin Private Hospital in 1998, but who was born alive, weighing 515 grams, and with "good vital signs". She lived for 80 minutes, alone in a kidney dish, though a sympathetic nurse wrapped a warm blanket around her as she died. At the time, the Northern Territory coroner said similar deaths had occurred elsewhere in Australia and that his counterpart in NSW had disclosed that "many terminated foetus live after they are expelled from the mother". This apparently ho-hum fact was dealt with last year by Australia's medico-ethical establishment when two Victorian academics published an article in the *Journal of Medical Ethics* advocating "after-birth abortion". They claimed "the same reasons which justify abortion should also justify the killing of the potential person when it is at the stage of a newborn". This is really the only logical end game to a culture of normalised abortion. Once you destroy the taboo protecting human life, Gosnell-style killing factories are the result. (Miranda Devine, *The Sunday Telegraph*, May 05, 2013)

Egypt cruelty death knell for live exports, warns Wilkie

AUSTRALIA'S live export trade is under renewed pressure after footage of shocking cruelty to Australian cattle in two Egyptian abattoirs was aired on the ABC last night. The segments, one recorded by a local vet last October and the other by an Animals Australia investigation team last month, show cattle being atrociously treated, deliberately injured and cruelly slaughtered. Animals Australia has renewed its calls for the entire industry to be banned. It says the continuing occurrences of cruelty in abattoirs in **Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan and Kuwait** show industry and government efforts to introduce and maintain new welfare standards are not working.

Animals Australia handed footage of the two Egyptian incidents to the Agriculture Department last Wednesday. They were viewed by cattle and export industry groups on Thursday, and the voluntary suspension of all live trade with Egypt was announced on Friday night. Federal Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig told the ABC's 7.30 last night he had faith in the existing tracking and audit system and that "99.9 per cent" of exported cattle were treated humanely. He based that on the number of complaints received by his department and his own confidence.

"It's the confidence that I can inform you and the confidence that the statistics, that the audits, which are on the website, demonstrate," he said. The Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System was established after the Indonesian live cattle export suspension in 2011, and makes Australian exporters accountable for their animals when they go overseas. Animals Australia campaign director Lyn White said the ESCAS measures were not enough. "I think the Australian industry is treating the Australian public like fools," she said.

Independent MP Andrew Wilkie last night declared the latest incident spelled the "death knell" for the live export industry and said it must be stopped. The footage taken at the Red Sea abattoir at Ain Sokhna was recorded only a few weeks ago by a visiting Animals Australia team after an Egyptian veterinarian alerted the organisation to cruelty at the northern meat works at Ismailia near Alexandria. He had shot an earlier video in October but Animals Australia said yesterday it had become aware of the Ismailia footage only early last month.

The Australian government is investigating the incidents, which include an injured animal being appallingly treated before being killed. Australian Live Exporters Council executive director Alison Penfold said while she was "distraught, sickened and disgusted" by the videos, banning all live exports would not advance animal welfare worldwide. "No one in our industry, and no Australian, accepts such treatment of animals, and I believe the Egyptian authorities will not tolerate this," Ms Penfold said. She said Australia was the only one of 100 live-exporting nations that was working to improve animal welfare standards. "Take us out of the marketplace (and) who is left to provide that training and the resources to provide (it)?" she said. The exporters have sent a delegation to Egypt to investigate. (Sue Neales, *The Australian*, May 07, 2013. Additional reporting: Mitchell Nadin)

Negotiation: Roles are still up for debate

Have you been haggling over the housework this weekend? And did your earnings have any bearing on the negotiations? The way housework is distributed in families is a puzzle. Even though women have greatly increased the amount of paid work they do over several decades, the time men spend on unpaid work in the household hasn't changed

much. You'd expect that men would spend more time on things like cooking, cleaning and shopping in response to such a momentous economic shift. But that hasn't happened.

One explanation for this, proposed by those who research the economics of households, is that men and women bargain over household labour based on how much money they earn. Since unpaid housework is considered unpleasant and menial, those with the most resources, usually men, bargain their way out of it. Partners with fewer resources - usually women - have less power and therefore spend more time on domestic unpaid work. When a woman starts to earn more money relative to her partner she bargains down the amount of housework she does. In other words, relative earnings determine how much each partner spends on housework. But some interesting new evidence has come to light in the US. Analysis of housework patterns by researcher Sanjiv Gupta shows women's absolute earnings, rather than their earnings relative to their partner, determine how much time they spend on housework. The more a woman earns, the less time she spends on housework, no matter what her partner earns. One possibility is that America's partnered women use their earnings to pay for household help. It might also be that women with higher earnings are just not that interested in housework and more willing to live in an untidy house. Could it be that money is finally becoming more important than gender in the allocation of housework?

The American findings prompted University of Queensland researchers Janeen Baxter and Belinda Hewitt to undertake a fresh investigation of how Australian couples distribute housework. Their detailed study *Negotiating Domestic Labor: Women's Earnings and Housework Time in Australia* shows Australia is quite different to America: the earlier bargaining theory still explains our housework patterns best. For Australian women the time they spend doing housework is more strongly affected by their relative earnings rather than by their absolute earnings.

Women who contributed an additional 1 per cent of relative weekly earnings, on average, did approximately 17 minutes less housework per week. When women work more, the amount of housework they do falls a little overall (about seven minutes less on housework per week for each additional hour of paid work). But having children significantly increases the amount of housework women do - about 40 extra minutes a week on average and an additional 1.7 hours if the children are aged under five. Baxter says she's found no evidence in her research that men increase hours of housework after having children (although they tend to spend more time doing childcare than in the past). But there's a curious twist. When women's earnings start to get close to their partner, the average time they spend on housework starts to rise again. Baxter and Hewitt summarise the patterns like this: "As women's relative earnings increase, they spend less time on housework, but only until they earn 66.56 per cent of weekly joint earnings, after which their time on housework increases." Other researchers have also found that as Australian women's earnings approach or surpass their partners', their housework time increases. It may be that women who earn as much or more than their partners feel they have to "counter their gender-deviant behaviour" by doing more housework. Often men with lower incomes than their partners also respond by doing even less around the house.

"In circumstances where women earn as much or more than their partners, both men and women display gender-appropriate behaviour by reverting to stereotypical involvement in domestic labour," say Baxter and Hewitt.

They conclude Australian men and women are more strongly tied to a traditional division of domestic labour than their counterparts in the US. It seems gender still trumps money in deciding who does the household chores in Australia. (Matt Wade, *The Sun-Herald*, April 21, 2013)

Scammed tourists begin class action

Australian holidaymakers are pursuing a class action lawsuit against one of the world's largest banks after hundreds of false accounts were used in an international travel scam.

Over the past 18 months, tourists have wired millions of dollars into accounts with London-based Barclays Bank to pay for luxury accommodation in dream destinations around the world. The vacations are booked through popular holiday rental websites including HomeAway and FlipKey, which is mostly owned by TripAdvisor.

However, the Barclays Bank accounts are run by criminals who, after hacking the sites and "phishing" the original email inquiry, assume the identity of the property owner and steer customers into making bogus bookings.

The internet is awash with blogs and forums where victims recount how they booked holiday accommodation and travelled overseas, only to discover the property owner had never heard of them.

In the past 12 months, Australians have become a prime target. While some have been left stranded in Miami, Florida and Paris, it is the luxury Balinese villas closer to home that are proving the most popular bait.

Fairfax Media can reveal that a group of Australian victims and Bali villa owners has enlisted London-based law firm Edwin Coe - which has successfully tackled one of the world's largest banks in other group actions - to commence a legal action against Barclays Bank. Beth King, from Victoria, who owns a holiday rental villa in Seminyak, Bali, said: "With their sophisticated hacking skills and inside knowledge of travellers' booking behaviour, these scammers are trapping people daily. This could all end tomorrow, if Barclays met its legal obligations and vetted the identity of account holders." Nick Hyam, another Seminyak villa owner, said: "I've had my identity cloned five times so far - and each time I contact Barclays, I hit a wall of indifference. This has affected hundreds of travellers. We are gathering documentation and a class action suit will be filed." On Saturday, a Barclays Bank spokesman said the company "complies with all regulatory requirements". "When we are made aware of inappropriate conduct on accounts, we immediately investigate and take the necessary steps to close them," he said.

Former two-time Winter Olympian Hannah Campbell-Pegg was one of dozens of victims to contact Fairfax Media after last week's report on the scam. She presumed she had been dealing with the Australian owner of a luxury villa in Canggu, Bali, a fortnight ago, but it was an impostor who had intercepted their communications.

Ms Campbell-Pegg, 30, said: "I booked through FlipKey. After reading the article, I became sceptical because I also transferred payment into a Barclays account in London. She added: "I contacted the owner, only to discover I had not been dealing with her. It seems her reply to my original email never made it through to me. It was intercepted by the scammer who then posed as her and sent one of his own ... I consider myself one of the lucky ones. Yes, I lost \$1600 but we were taking my partner's daughter on her first big trip overseas. Like countless others, we could so easily have arrived at the villa, only to discover we had nowhere to stay."

Criminals previously ran the scam using dozens of accounts opened through another Britain-based bank, Lloyds. The bank subsequently tightened its identification process. The scammers then began swarming Barclays branches across

London, starting some 18 months ago. Money continues to pour in from around the globe. Last November, Jennifer Bobyk, from Sydney, booked a three-month stay in Chiang Mai, Thailand, through online travel site TripAdvisor, forwarding a \$2000 cash transfer via Barclays. "We took a taxi to the estate but the owner said she had not received the booking or the money. When I Googled the address of the account holder (in England), it was a house for sale. I contacted TripAdvisor, our bank and the ACCC. Nobody was interested."

Fiona Melia, from Merimbula on the NSW south coast, parted with \$2900 in February to book a luxury villa in Seminyak, where she was due to arrive next week. When the property owner recently contacted her to ask whether she was still interested in staying, the truth unravelled. "The scammer intercepted my email, then acted as the owner. He replied to all my individual emails about particulars like breakfast. Everything appeared normal."

The Barclays spokesman said the bank regularly provides advice to help customers avoid fraud, including "using reputable third-party payment processing sites rather than making a direct transfer to the seller's bank account."

FlipKey failed to respond to questions from Fairfax Media but HomeAway, which lists more than a 1000 privately owned rental villas and apartments in Bali alone, said it had launched a "massive education effort" and a basic rental guarantee which reimburses phishing victims up to \$1000. General manager James Cassidy advised travellers to always "call the owner before they send any money, to confirm their reservation".

Stung speak out against litany of lies:

Anna Jaques, Sydney: "My 21-year-old daughter Laura rented a condo in Miami advertised via Vacation Rentals [a subsidiary of HomeAway]. This was her first trip away from home after completing school. She rang me in hysterics. When she arrived in March, she was told by the manager she had been scammed. The scammer had intercepted communications between vacation rentals and himself, subsequently taking his name to conduct business. She is still travelling the US. I have filed a fraud complaint with the ACCC and Barclays Bank, London. I've heard nothing."

Nicole Leighton, Sydney: "We booked and paid for a villa in Ubud, Bali, for seven nights (in March). The villa owner had no record of our booking ... he had had four other cases. He helped us contact Barclays Bank. Barclays simply said 'thanks for the call' and advised us if we wanted our money back, we would have to hire a lawyer to do so."

Jon Jones: owner of Villa Amrita, Ubud, Bali: "The latest person who believed he was coming to stay with us arrived Wednesday. I have been trying to speak to Barclays since January. I told them, 'look at the pattern. You have a bunch of accounts receiving wires from all over the world'. They wouldn't even let me submit any documentary evidence to demonstrate what's happening. They don't want to know."

Robyn Graham, Melbourne: "We sent through a request on HomeAway.com and began email exchanges with the 'owner' of a luxury villa in Bali. We were sent a rental agreement and paid £950 into an English Barclays account. We were due to arrive this Tuesday. But we became suspicious when we had to chase the owner to make sure the money had gone through. When we Googled the name attached to the bank account, pages of scams appeared. He had done the same to people around the world. The most horrible part is, a renowned website put us in direct touch with him. Their response, to date, has been appalling."

Nicole Harding: "In January 2013 I sent a booking request through HomeAway.com requesting availability of dates in October for Villa Zara in Bali. I transferred \$2025 to Barclays as payment for the accommodation on February 27, 2013, after numerous emails back and forth between myself and 'Paul' confirming dates. As Paul never replied, I did a Google search and found ... sites advising of the scam."

Full statement by Barclays Bank. "Barclays can confirm that in opening and managing accounts, it complies with all regulatory requirements including in respect of identification and verification. When we are made aware of inappropriate conduct on accounts, we will immediately investigate and take the necessary steps to close them."

"We recognise that some consumers' interests have been damaged as a result of the conduct of some customers and that money has been lost. Regrettably, we are unable to provide any refund for individuals who lost money before we were made aware of the situation. "We regularly give advice to our customers to help them to avoid this type of fraud for example by using reputable third party payment processing sites rather than making a direct transfer to the seller's bank account." Victims are encouraged to contact: vacationrentalscamvictims@yahoo.com (Eamonn Duff, *The Sun-Herald*, April 21, 2013)

Why Stressed-Out Men Prefer Heavier Women

Most men prefer leggy and lean women, Gisele Bündchen lookalikes, right? Not necessarily. In fact, the body type that a man finds attractive can change depending on his environment and circumstances, a new study finds: when under stress, for instance, men prefer heavier women.

The study, published in the journal *PLoS ONE*, reports that when men were placed in stressful situations, then asked to rate the attractiveness of women of varying body sizes, they tended to prefer beefier frames, compared with unstressed men whose tastes skewed thinner.

"This suggests that our body size preferences are not innate, but are flexible," said study co-author Martin Tovée of Newcastle University in the U.K., in an email, noting that they may be influenced by our particular environment and resources. The findings fall in line with evolutionary theories that suggest when resources are scarce or unpredictable, a woman's thin physique may signal illness, frailty and the inability to reproduce. Indeed, Tovée and colleague Viren Swami of the University of Westminster in London have previously found that men under trying conditions — like extreme hunger — tend to rate heavier women as more attractive. The researchers suggest also that underlying biological mechanisms, such as blood sugar and hormone levels, are major players in how we perceive our surroundings. "Our work in parts of Malaysia and Africa has shown that in poorer environments where resources are scarce, people prefer a heavy body in a potential partner," said Tovée. "If you live in an environment where food is scarce, being heavier means you have fat stored up as a buffer against a potential food reduction in the future, and that you must be higher social status to afford the food in the first place. Both of these are attractive qualities in a partner in those circumstances." Moving from a low-resource environment to a richer one, like the U.K. or the U.S., can cause a shift in these preferences, says Tovée, and to test the theory further, the researchers recruited some male volunteers and manipulated their stress levels — a key problem for people living in poor environments.

The study examined 81 heterosexual men, about half of whom underwent the Trier Social Stress Test. In the test, the men participated in an impromptu job interview in front of four interviewers. They were asked them to "sell" themselves for five minutes, and then calculate answers to simple math problems under time pressure. Afterward, all the study

participants were shown images of 10 women with body types ranging from emaciated to obese and were asked to rank them based on their attractiveness. The images were numbered on a scale of 1 to 10 based on the women's body mass index (BMI), with 1 representing very thin and 10 obese. The largest body size rated attractive by the stressed-out men was 7.17, which fell in the overweight category. The largest body type deemed attractive by the unstressed control group was 6.25, which was considered normal on the BMI scale.

Overall, stressed men preferred a bigger body — their “ideal” figure was a 4.44 — than the unstressed men, who idealized a thinner body type, at 3.90. Stressed-out men not only rated heavier women as more attractive, but they also gave higher ratings to a wider range of body types overall.

“This shift suggests that stress alters what you find attractive in a potential partner, and it is another factor helping you to optimize the fit of your partner preferences to your environment,” said Tovée. Understanding how body preferences may change or be influenced by circumstance also sheds light on the development of warped body image, the authors say. “People suffering from conditions such as anorexia nervosa have a distorted perception of body size and body ideals, and it's important that research focus on the mechanisms underlying and influencing the perception of body size,” says Tovée. Despite our media's seeming reverence for size-zero models and ripped muscle men, it may help people suffering from eating disorders and other body-image problems to know that such body “ideals” are not exactly ideal after all. “The information from this article could be useful in therapy of anxiety and eating disorders,” Dr. Igor Galynker, associate chairman of the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Beth Israel Medical Center, told ABC News. “The information could be an alternative to thoughts such as, ‘I am fat; no man would find me attractive.’” (Alexandra Sifferlin, *Time*, Aug. 09, 2012)

Who you gonna call? Not me

Tech-addict Megan Levy gets used to an electronics-free break with surprisingly little trouble.

The view across the still bay and up into the pink granite peaks is so striking it's crying out to be Instagrammed. But that won't be happening in this quiet pocket of Tasmania, where a man in a dark suit has confiscated my iPhone and iPad, and sentenced them to sit in the naughty corner for the weekend.

For many Australians for whom the devices have become an appendage, two days without the dings and buzzes of email, Facebook and Twitter is a monumental challenge. Sit on any bus or train in the city and watch the masses stooped over, swiping away furiously with their index fingers. Ridiculously, I was sitting at home tethered to both my laptop and iPad when the email pinged in from our southern cousins. Would I like to come down for the weekend to Saffire Freycinet, a lodge on the fringe of the Freycinet National Park on Tasmania's wild east coast, to disconnect, quite literally, for the weekend? All phones and digital devices would be banned. It's not so much a detox, but an etox, and I'm the first to admit it: I'm a technology addict.

If there's an ideal place to calm a busy brain, this luxury lodge would be among the leading contenders. Certainly you pay handsomely for the experience — a four-figure sum a night — but the experience is, well ... it's electric.

There are 20 spacious private suites, each with glass walls positioned to take in sweeping views of Coles Bay and the Hazards mountain chain. Some have private plunge pools. The bath, again with a view, looks as though a small car could be submerged in it. I was wondering what could possibly occupy my “device hand”. It turns out the extensive minibar is all inclusive. It's a short, covered walk to the main, stingray-shaped lodge, which contains the lounge and gourmet restaurant, touted as the best in Tasmania. Again, all food and drinks are included. And it's here that, on check-in, the concierge plucks my electronic devices from my hands and banishes them to the safe.

The first morning at Saffire began with a tweet of a different kind: a kookaburra, pecking at the window at breakfast. If I was on the outside gazing in on my ricotta hotcakes and rice pudding — fancier than the kind mum used to make (sorry, mum) — I'd want in on the action too. At Palate Restaurant, chef Hugh Whitehouse, a champion of Tassie produce and the former chef at Darleys in the Blue Mountains, has put together an exceptional menu to rival any city eatery. The dinner menu includes truffles and oysters, pulled from the bay that day, slow-braised quail and gently poached striped trumpeter, to name just a few dishes, with wine to match.

The Apple Isle has turned on a stunner, and we're off on the boat for a cruise around Schouten Island and along the isolated white sand wilderness that is Great Oyster Bay. Phoneless, I've had to remember to bring a camera. My phone is also my clock, and I begin to ask Captain Wally for the time before I realise that, really, it doesn't matter. Where do I have to be, except sitting starboard-side enjoying the bay breeze as we push quietly up the coast in the autumn sunshine? We pull up close to a colony of seals and watch as they slide into the sea with a splash. Then we cruise into a turquoise bay for a cuppa and cake on deck.

There's another initial urge to Instagram that afternoon when I'm standing thigh-deep in an estuary in an ugly pair of waterproof waders. Our guide, Joel, has whipped out a white cloth to cover the table that's perched in the water. We gather oysters from the water and shuck them, before slurping them down. Bless whoever remembered the bottle of sparkling. The next day starts with a private yoga lesson in my suite from Helen, who stretches my legs into angles they'll never grace again. Then it's an etox facial and scrub, the gold-standard in beauty treatment. Or the diamond standard — my body is literally polished with crushed diamonds.

Perhaps the most tranquil moments are spent sitting and watching as the bay transforms in the evening light, and gazing up at the star-choked sky at night. There's a sense of freedom without the need to look at those small screens that have somehow barged into my life. In a world of digital domination, it's a relief to switch off and recharge your inner batteries, rather than the ones on your digital devices. (Megan Levy, *The Sun-Herald*, April 28, 2013)

We're not all born the same but we can provide equality in education

Among certain Aussies, the colloquial term “gonieski” is used as a play on the word “gone”, meaning used up or finished. It's also often applied to a person who is thoroughly befuddled by alcohol or love, incapacitated by serious injury, or soon to be found guilty of criminal charges. If you're “gonieski”, you're screwed.

I therefore found it unfortunate that the most important changes to our nation's education system in years were named the “Gonski reforms”, after their author, businessman David Gonski. It doesn't bode well for their adoption.

Some people might blanch at the idea of a multimillionaire investment banker like Gonski offering structural advice on public education, but he strikes me as the perfect candidate.

More than most, Gonski would be aware of an ugly little fact of life: all human beings are not equal.

Born to wealth, educated at the best institutions this country has to offer, Gonski must know how much the accident of birth and life's disproportionately distributed opportunities can shape a life.

Politically incorrect as it may be to say it, the harsh truth is we're born unequal and live myriad unequal lives. Then we die. Even our death and the way the world views it is unequal (as we saw in Boston and Iraq recently). Some of us get state funerals and obituaries published on the front page of the newspaper. Some of us liquefy in an armchair before we're found three months later by a gas-company worker. "Nature has not read the American Declaration of Independence or the French Revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man," wrote Pulitzer Prize-winning historians Will and Ariel Durant. I'm pretty sure nature's not seen a copy of Australia's equal opportunities act, either.

The reality of Australia is we have hundreds of laws to enforce an equality that does not, never has, and never will exist in nature. The best we can hope for is "an approximate equality" from our legal system and education opportunities - a society where all of our potentials are nurtured and given the chance to bloom.

This is why education matters. It's why early education and the funding we give it matters even more than how we endow our universities and technical colleges. By the time a child becomes a youth, the inequalities of birth, geography, class and opportunity have largely crystallised. A burst of subsidised university fees is not going to help the blue-collar teen who can barely spell because his primary school was a dump staffed by indifferent gumps. This is not a political viewpoint, it's an undeniable lesson of history. It strikes me as uncharitable and disingenuous to argue the contrary, because to deny education's transformative and equalising power benefits most those who don't need it. If we do nothing, the strong, the rich, the exceptional, win by default. Prioritising and improving our primary and secondary education systems is arguably the only way we can level life's playing field - at least at the beginning of people's lives. Then nature takes over once more. (Sam de Brito, *The Sun-Herald*, April 28, 2013)

Bloomberg News apologises for data access 'error'

BLOOMBERG News has apologised for an "error" that allowed its journalists to access private client data through its financial terminals, saying it would "strive to continue to uphold the highest standards" in its reporting.

"Our reporters should not have access to any data considered proprietary," Bloomberg editor-in-chief Matthew Winkler said in a statement posted on the news website. "I am sorry they did. The error is inexcusable. Last month, we immediately changed our policy so that reporters now have no greater access to information than our customers have." The Bloomberg financial terminals, which are operated separately from the news service, allow banks and other financial professionals the ability to research virtually any type of financial asset and carry out trades.

The Wall Street Journal and *USA Today* reported meanwhile that the US Treasury and Federal Reserve had asked for information on whether Bloomberg reporters had accessed the accounts of Fed chairman Ben Bernanke and former Treasury secretary Timothy Geithner. Bloomberg announced on Friday it was curbing reporter access to certain data on its financial terminals after reports claiming its journalists used the devices to spy on Wall Street banks. A Bloomberg spokesman acknowledged that "limited customer relationship data has long been available to our journalists", without "security-level" data, trading data or messages.

Winkler said that the access standards were "are almost as old as Bloomberg News," noting that "our reporters used to go to clients in the early days of the company and ask them what topics they wanted to see covered".

But the editor added that its journalists, "upon hiring, enter into a confidentiality agreement that strictly prohibits them from discussing non-public Bloomberg documents and proprietary information about the company and its clients in their reporting". Following the recent revelations, Winkler said that "we should go above and beyond in protecting data, especially when we have even the appearance of impropriety."

"We apologise for our error as it does not reflect on our culture or our heritage," Winkler said.

"And we will strive to continue to uphold the highest standards while adhering to the best practices in the industry as long as we may be fortunate to serve our customers as they would have us serve them."

The *New York Post* reported Friday that Goldman Sachs confronted Bloomberg over concerns that reporters at the news service had been using the financial information terminals to keep tabs on employees of the bank.

According to the report, Goldman found that Bloomberg staffers could determine which employees had logged into Bloomberg's proprietary terminals and how many times they had used particular functions. A separate report by the *Financial Times* said JPMorgan Chase had also complained that Bloomberg reporters were spying on activities by bank employees. Bloomberg was founded by New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who is not involved in management due to his political activities. (AFP, May 13, 2013)

Science and the Environment

CO2 in atmosphere hits historic high not seen since before humans existed

THE level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has surpassed 400 parts per million for the first time in human history, US monitors say, sparking new calls for action to scale back greenhouse gases. Climate scientists say the threshold is largely symbolic and has been expected for some time, but warn that it serves as an important message that people need to reverse the damage caused to the environment by the heavy use of fossil fuels.

The Earth has not seen these levels of CO2 in three to five million years, long before humans existed, in a time when temperatures were several degrees Celsius warmer and the sea level was 20-40 metres higher than today, experts say. "We are creating a prehistoric climate in which human societies will face huge and potentially catastrophic risks," said Bob Ward, policy director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics and Political Science. "Only by urgently reducing global emissions will we be able to bring carbon dioxide levels down and avoid the full consequences of turning back the climate clock."

Data showing that the daily average CO2 over the Pacific Ocean was 400.03 ppm as of May 9 was posted online by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's monitoring centre in Mauna Loa, Hawaii.

A separate monitor at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, California concurred, with its measurements showing atmospheric carbon dioxide at 400.08 ppm.

Michael Mann, director of the Earth System Science Center at Penn State, said the main concern is the speed with which the concentrations of CO₂ are rising. "There is no precedent in Earth's history for such an abrupt increase in greenhouse gas concentrations," Mann, who has authored two books on climate change, told AFP.

"It took nature hundreds of millions of years to change CO₂ concentrations through natural processes such as natural carbon burial and volcanic outgassing," he said. "What we are doing is unburying it. But not over 100 million years. We're unburying it and burning it over a timescale of 100 years, a million times faster."

Experts have long expected the 400 ppm threshold would be passed. "In itself the value 400 ppm of CO₂ has no particular significance for the physics of the climate system," said Joanna Haigh, atmospheric physicist and head of the department of physics at Imperial College London. "However, this does give us the chance to mark the ongoing increase in CO₂ concentration and talk about why it's a problem for the climate."

Haigh said that unless swift action is taken, "the planet will warm by more than two degrees Celsius, which is the temperature threshold that scientists are worried about." Pre-industrial measurements of CO₂ were about 280 ppm. Greenhouse gases have risen steadily since records began in the 1950s, and are likely to soar by the end of the century, said the Grantham Institute's director Brian Hoskins. "We'll certainly see them rise higher than they are now. Given current human activity, levels of CO₂ could be near 800 ppm by end of century," he said.

"Unless as a society we devise ways to remove CO₂ directly from atmosphere, such as through negative emissions technologies, we're going to be stuck with a very slow decrease of CO₂ from peak levels, and everybody will have to deal with the implications of global warming." (Kerry Sheridan, AAP, May 13, 2013)

Wave of ice marches on homes

Glaciers roll ashore into houses. Dramatic phone footage shows ice flows from a lake in Michigan rolling ashore and relentlessly closing in on lakeside houses. It's a scene that could be from a '70s horror movie: A wave of ice crystals relentlessly marching towards homes in the United States.

The wave of ice crept off a lake in Minnesota - as foam froze and was pushed ashore by strong, icy winds.

Billions of needles of ice seemingly crawl up out of the lake and swarm over the shoreline.

Up to three feet deep, the ice eventually forced itself into houses after ripping up bushes, trees and fences as it marched up the beach. The eerie crackling sound is from ice crystals cracking as the ice needles move and grow.

The phenomenon follows several weeks of unusual weather conditions in the United States. Late snowfall and cold winds have dominated the unusually late spring. (news.com.au, May 12, 2013)

Grapes feel the heat

Areas once considered too cold for growing grapes are becoming suitable for wine production, thanks to climate change. But traditional wine regions are also being affected. The US Environmental Defense Fund estimates that by 2050, 85 per cent of land in Mediterranean Europe now suitable for grape growing will become too hot and dry to support crops. About 60 per cent of Californian wine country is expected to meet the same fate, forcing producers to move to new areas. In a paper published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* and reported in *The New York Times*, researchers expressed concern about the effect this could have on wildlife and flora. The paper says the introduction of vineyards has long-term effects on existing ecosystems. It affects water sources, introduces fertilisers and other chemicals, and is unsuitable for native species. (Lissa Christopher, April 19, 2013)

Politicians warned on DNA profiling

Legislators should move quickly to place restrictions on DNA profiling techniques being developed by Australian police and researchers, say criminology experts.

The Canberra Times revealed on Wednesday that the Australian Federal Police, in collaboration with Victoria Police and researchers from the University of Canberra and Queensland Institute of Medical Research, were developing a test that could allow police to use a tiny scrap of DNA evidence from a crime scene to identify physical characteristics of potential suspects. Using only a piece of skin or a spot of blood, scientists are trying to tell, among other features, if a person had a cleft chin or attached earlobes, and to uncover their biogeographic ancestry. Although it was still a long way off, researchers said the ultimate goal was to develop a DNA test to create a picture of what a potential suspect might look like.

ANU criminology lecturer Emmeline Taylor said she was concerned that the Australian research could encourage the type of behaviour seen after the recent Boston bombings, where amateur investigators scanned crowd images for people who stood out for their visual ethnicity, a process one news source termed a "racist Where's Wally". She said DNA profiling could not predict features that fundamentally changed how a person looked, such as lost teeth, malnutrition, scars and tattoos. "I'd be very concerned if these photo fits are going to be quite crude depictions of people, based essentially on their ethnic and racial characteristics," she said.

Dr Taylor said while the developing science on DNA was "fascinating", Australia did not have a legislative framework to begin using such sensitive information to identify suspects.

She said there was a danger that, once developed, the technology could be misused in other settings.

"What you quite often find with what I would call any sort of surveillance information is you always have significant function creep, so what now might seem like quite a useful technology within policing, people then think that could be quite useful for insurance or health purposes," she said. The director of Civil Liberties Australia, Tim Vines, said there was a risk that DNA profiling would lead to false information going out to the public or cases of mistaken identity. "We're interested in seeing how the science develops in this way, but feel the public should understand that there are limitations in our understanding of how our genes affect our appearance, and that there's not going to be a silver bullet when it comes to DNA testing and the identification of who actually did it," he said.

Dr Taylor was also concerned that some racial groups could come to be seen to be inherently criminal, ignoring the social dynamics that underpin criminal behaviour. "Before we start to use this type of data in practice, there needs to be that kind of discussion to set the parameters around usage, what are our expectations around privacy and where do we draw the boundaries," she said. (Larissa Nicholson, *The Canberra Times*, April 25, 2013)

The Hordes of Microbes Inside Your Body Are Your Friends

An interview with the synthetic biologist Christina Agapakis

As tools for engineering life's building blocks have proliferated in recent years, our definition of human life has become more expansive. For example, we are learning that the vast ecosystems of microbes inside our bodies are as integral to our health as our own tissues, affecting everything from our immune systems to our brain chemistry. Meanwhile, the field of biology itself keeps expanding—see, for example, synthetic biology, the new subfield that uses the combined insights of molecular biology, engineering, and chemistry to construct biological parts and processes. The synthetic biologist Christina Agapakis, a postdoctoral researcher at UCLA, works at the intersection of these developments. She is also part of a cohort of scientists rethinking the role of biology in our culture.

Alexis Madrigal: People have big expectations for biology in the 21st century. Many say that biotech will be as big as information technology was in recent decades. Is that true?

Christina Agapakis: People want synthetic biology and biotechnology to be the next industrial revolution. Looking back, people have tended over time to imagine bodies functioning in ways that were analogous to the dominant technological paradigm of their day, whether that was steam engines or computers. I hope that soon biology will be the technology we judge things by. Maybe we're going to see industry and computational stuff start to look more like biology, rather than biology looking more like industry and computation.

AM: Some synthetic biologists have pushed to bring an engineering mind-set to biology. People talk about creating standard DNA "parts," called BioBricks. What are those?

CA: The idea behind BioBrick parts is that you can have a collection of pieces of DNA that have specific useful functions—off-the-shelf DNA parts. You are able to say, "Okay, I need a part that is fluorescent," or "I need a part that will activate in response to this chemical." Then you can mix and match: you put them both in a bacterium, and then you have fluorescence in response to some chemical—so we can have this kind of RadioShack.

AM: You've looked at how communities of bacteria work together in the human body and elsewhere. To what extent could we actively engineer our own microbial ecosystem in the future?

CA: We can influence it—we can change the diversity in our gut, and that can influence health. There's the fecal-transplant example: Sometimes even antibiotics can't clear up serious digestive infections, and you can't repopulate the gut with enough good bacteria to get rid of the bad ones. But if you transplant the microbial community from a healthy gut into the person who has this infection, the healthy bacteria will push out the infectious bacteria. The challenge is, you can't say "You need this many of this and this many of this, and it's going to stay like that forever." It's more a matter of setting the right initial conditions.

AM: There seems to be a tension between the complexity of life, which only gets more intricate the closer you look, and the speed of improvement in the DNA-sequencing technologies that allow us to see that intricacy. The more we learn about the building blocks of life, the more we realize just how much we still *don't* understand. Which will win out in the short term—the sense that we know more than ever, or the sense that life is even more mysterious than we'd grasped?

CA: It's not really a matter of "winning." Tools that read and write DNA help us understand that complexity, but they're not enough. Sequencing is not going to tell you how genes are activated, how proteins interact with each other, how the cell interacts with its environment and with other cells. We're seeing, in the explosion of other kinds of "-omes" [for example, genomes, proteomes, metabolomes], a complexity that will require more than DNA sequencing to decipher. The price of DNA synthesis is falling, but the overall price of synthetic-biology projects isn't going down at the same pace, because there is a lot more to the design, construction, and testing of synthetic systems. As Stanford's Drew Endy likes to say, "Just because we can write DNA doesn't mean we know what to say." An artful biological design is an incredibly complex endeavor, not just because of the complexity inside the cell. We also have to think about how applications will be marketed, regulated, and patented; how they will interact with the environment; and many other things that we won't learn from just the sequence—if at all. (Alexis C. Madrigal, *The Atlantic*, April 24, 2013)

Unidentified flying objects

Here's something new to keep you awake at night. While no civilisation-destroying asteroids are expected to collide with Earth this century, space may well be littered with smaller ones that could eradicate a city, say NASA specialists taking part in space threats hearings in Washington, DC, last week. Speaking at the hearings, Lamar Smith, the chair of the US house, space, science and technology committee, said scientists had identified only 10 per cent of the asteroids with potential to destroy a city.

Another space expert said it was possible for a spacecraft to ram an Earth-threatening asteroid to alter its path, but this could be done only if the asteroid's course was already known. (Lissa Christopher, *SMH*, April 19, 2013)

Aussies fix 'stagnated' email

Email has "stagnated" and three Australians who quit Google say they have built a product that will change the way we interact with email and allow us to get through our bulging inboxes "20 per cent faster". Cameron Adams, 32, and Dhanji Prasanna, 31, began work on **Fluent** full-time about six months ago, after becoming frustrated at Google's work culture and leaving the company about the middle of last year. The third co-founder, Jochen Bekmann, left Google to join them in November. The trio quit Google after the company's **Wave messaging product was axed**, and their comments about being frustrated at Google (**below**) are **similar to those made by Lars Rasmussen**, another Australian member of the Wave team who left Google, joining Facebook.

Ironically, Fluent integrates only with the team's ex-employer's Gmail service to create an experience that shows users their email and its contents in a stream-like fashion similar to how one views a friend's posts on Facebook or Twitter. In the future it will also allow other email services such as Hotmail to be integrated. "We're trying to ... imagine the future of email," Adams said. "We think that email has sort of stagnated and got into these set patterns of people using it and it's not being pushed forward any more." One thing Fluent aimed to change about email was presenting it in a stream that lets one action items as quickly as possible, Adams said. "So rather than having to receive a message, look at the subject, click on it,

read the conversation, and then decide what to do, we sort of present you with the information that you need to immediately action on it."

Other features of Fluent include letting users quickly browse attachments such as images in a slide show format, the ability to search for emails as one types - something Google's search engine pioneered with "**Instant Search**" but is not available in Gmail - and the ability to pinpoint emails one has sent to a specified email address on a timeline. Another feature in Fluent, which Adams said most webmail clients were "pretty horrible" at dealing with, was its focus on letting users access multiple email accounts under one log-in. "The market that we're going for initially is sort of independent professionals and small businesses that tend to have personal accounts [and] maybe several work accounts," Adams said. "It's quite important for them to be able to check their multiple accounts at the same time."

He claimed Fluent users would be able to get through their email "20 per cent faster" than they do now. Co-founder Prasanna said one of the features that he worked on in Fluent that made it faster to browse an email inbox was search. "What we're trying to do with search is really alter the dynamics of how you go through your email," Prasanna said. One way of doing that was by implementing a feature he called "search as you type", which, as the name suggests, brings up search results in real time as you type in each character of a search query.

"It's really slick and fast," Prasanna said, adding that it was something that "no webmail client does right now". "Not even Outlook or Thunderbird do a good job of this. It's really weak for them," he said. The search functionality works by Fluent indexing all of one's emails when it first imports all of one's messages from Gmail. Once imported, all future emails are automatically indexed and synchronised with Gmail. Another thing Fluent is "trying to pioneer" apart from really fast search, Prasanna said, was the idea of searching by time. "If you look through a conversation with a specific person ... we show you a timeline of all your emails with that person on a scale. So [if] you know you got an email from Cameron like a month ago ... you click that [month] and it just shows you that month backwards."

Adams said that, from today, Fluent would let a limited number of users trial its product as beta users. He said the business plan was to offer the basic email experience - which might or might not be free - but also offer a premium version with features that went beyond standard email, such as offering document collaboration, file-sharing and integration with services such as **Dropbox**, **Evernote** and **Google Docs**. A price for the premium features was yet to be worked out. "We still have to test the market on that one," Adams said. Mobile versions of the app were also being worked on, which catered to the strengths of the iPad, iPhone and Android touch capabilities, Adams said.

"When you're on your mobile or you're on your iPad you're less in a replying mode and more in a consumption triage mode. So one thing we wanted to make Fluent do was make it sort of easy to organise your inbox. "So with touch you can just swipe to the right to [mark an email] as a to do or archive by swiping it to the left. The idea is that if you're on your phone you can 'to do' a bunch of stuff or get a bunch of stuff out of your inbox when you're on the ferry to work ... and then once you land at work you can jump on to your desktop and get the same sort of experience but have a much easier typing experience for replying and doing more of the hard work."

Bart Jellema, founder of **ZEROmail**, a service similar to Fluent which focuses primarily on getting rid of emails in a user's inbox, said Fluent had "a very slick user interface" but questioned how it worked in reality. "Having worked with email for a full year now, it's very messy. How do you work around all that? That's yet to be seen." Jellema said Fluent made doing email "a little faster" but said he didn't "see any sort of new thinking" in the product from what he had seen the Fluent team do so far.

Why they left Google

Adams said he left Google towards the end of July last year because the design culture was "still maturing and finding its feet". He had been working for about three years on the Google Wave project, which was cancelled in August 2010, and said his experience as an employee of Google in Sydney made him feel like he "wasn't contributing much" to Google's products. "They value engineers a lot more highly than designers and often you're just there to make things look pretty," he said, adding that designers like himself tended "to get slightly frustrated at Google".

"There's definitely some designers that make a good go of it but particular out in Sydney I think it's quite hard to have an effect. Sydney tends to sort of have a satellite office effect where you get smaller projects and there is less involvement in the whole life cycle of product development."

Prasanna had similar reasons for leaving. After Google Wave was cancelled he began work on building new features for Google+, the search giant's attempt at building a social network similar to Facebook, with Cameron. "The problem was that every time we brought it to a particular stage and took it to [Google in Mountain View, California] they were not keen on launching it just yet. They said, 'Why don't you guys go back and change it a little bit and do this and do that.' So it became quite frustrating and ... being in a satellite office you're not plugged into the main project's arteries." Adams said that what they were contributing to Google+ "was quite experimental" and was yet to be used. "It wasn't going to be a core feature of Google+. It was kind of more a forward-thinking thing [about] what the next stage of Google+ would be." He added that being in Sydney meant it was "hard to stay in the minds of the people over in Mountain View". "When we did our work we'd take it over to them and they'd be like 'Yeah that's cool but we can't do anything with it.'" Adams said Fluent's other co-founder, Jochen Bekmann, had a "similar story" in working for Google. Prasanna said that Bekmann first worked on a Google Maps project before it got cancelled. He then joined Wave before it was cancelled and then went back to work on Maps. "He was doing that for a while and then Cameron and I approached him. (Ben Grubb, *SMH*, February 21, 2012)

Turbulence ahead

Fasten your seatbelt, international flights are likely to encounter more turbulence as a result of global warming, according to British researchers. Their paper, published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, estimates that by 2050, increased carbon dioxide levels could create a 170 per cent increase in turbulence over the north Atlantic and a 40 per cent increase in its intensity. The study's authors say other areas of the atmosphere are likely to be similarly affected, and flights will get longer and more expensive as passenger aircraft are forced to avoid areas of turbulence. More fuel used as flights alter their courses means more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which means even more. (Lissa Christopher, April 19, 2013)

Economics

Marketing message rises to occasion

BIG companies devote whole departments to it.

If you are a small business operator, chances are that, on top of all the other jobs you are juggling, you are wearing the chief marketer's hat. But what is marketing? It works on the idea that you might have the world's best product or service but if no one knows about it, it is pointless.

Marketing is also described as everything you do that keeps happy customers coming back to buy your goods and services. It requires a plan that will lay out how to find customers, how to satisfy them, how to get them back and how to keep adding value and loyalty. Unlike the big marketing departments with their arsenal of heavy-hitters and big bucks to target advertising, sponsorship, social media and events, you will have to keep it simple. Flying Solo founder Robert Gerrish says there is plenty of free and simple advice. "Go to a bookshop. For \$25, you can get the best knowledge you can buy," he says. "It's a very retro thing but all the best marketers have written books."

Flying Solo, which is an online support network for micro businesses, says small business operators should block aside 20 minutes every morning to focus on marketing.

"Marketing is creating a feeling or a situation where someone likes the look of what you do," Gerrish says.

But he warns marketing is about building a slow and steady relationship. "You don't go into a room full of people and start yelling at them." Gerrish says too often small businesses panic and go on a marketing binge. He says people don't need to spend a lot of money, but many will need help expressing their message.

People should look at having a number of meaningful conversations with prospects every day. They could be with potential clients and people from their recent past they have lost contact with. Gerrish says social media, in its various forms, is a wonderful tool if used properly. Successful businessman and Small Business Mentoring Service mentor Bruce Hall tells his clients to set aside time each day, or a morning a week, specifically for marketing.

"Where people allocate time to promote their business, they see results," he says.

Hall says it might be as easy as a new business operator taking the time to meet other businesses and leaving a card. He says one of the best things small business operators can do is speak to customers regularly. "Find out about their needs, their concerns and what is not being delivered." In addition to identifying desired customers, business owners need to take the time to learn about their world, needs and challenges.

While there is a shift to the competitive world of online marketing, Hall says businesses providing comparisons, tips and information on their websites do much better. "It can't just be an online brochure. People might look at 10 to 12 websites, so your website needs to inform and educate the customer," he says. Hall says businesses with a bricks and mortar presence need to step back and look at their premises to see how the customer sees it.

> Marketing 101: Get your pricing right.

* A poor retail site, with low rent and low traffic, will require more marketing.

* Don't choose an obscure, hard to pronounce name. Word-of-mouth won't work if people can't say it.

* Getting your logo right is important as it is expensive to rebrand.

* Websites are getting cheaper and more DIY. Make Google happy by including as many key words (terms that people will use in their searches) in your text. Keep content fresh and think of doing a blog.

* Join an industry association and morph yourself into an expert on a given topic.

(Claire Heaney, *The Telegraph*, May 05, 2013)

End of war undercuts US economic recovery

A steep slowdown in defense spending tied to the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is undercutting the country's economic recovery, new government data released Friday revealed. The report showed gross domestic product grew at an annual rate of 2.5 percent during the first three months of the year — significantly slower than most economists had expected. The culprit? A surprising 11.5 percent annualized drop-off in military spending.

Many Americans report that they are feeling better about their personal finances and are even paying down their debt, or just refinancing into lower rates. Even so, the U.S. savings rate still lags most of the rest of the world. And the key to long-term stability, experts say, is building better habits to sock that money away. The decline comes on the heels of an even bigger plunge in defense spending at the end of last year that brought economic growth to a standstill. Taken together, the two quarters represent the steepest declines in military outlays since the Korean War, according to JPMorgan Chase economist Michael Feroli. The GDP report amounts to a caution about the looming consequences of federal spending cuts known as the sequester. The cuts officially began in March but could take months — or even years — to fully digest. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the sequester will shave nearly half a percentage point from economic growth this year, delaying projections for economic liftoff to 2014.

"The longer-running story has not changed, as the economy remains mired in the pattern of slow and uneven growth seen since the end of the Great Recession," said Richard Moody, chief economist at Regions Bank.

Consider just the past year of the recovery. Last spring, the economy was treading water before the pace of growth picked up to more than 3 percent at an annual rate over the summer. But hopes for a sustainable recovery dissipated by the end of the year when economic growth stalled. The bounce-back this year has been weaker than expected by many analysts, who have already begun warning that any momentum that had built up has likely already cooled. Economists forecast that the growth rate during the second quarter will be an anemic 1 to 2 percent.

Even the good news in the GDP report came tempered with caveats: The biggest single driver of growth during the first quarter was a surge in business inventories, contributing about one percentage point of growth. But economist Ben Herzon of Macroeconomic Advisers noted that most of that stockpiling was done in January.

Consumer spending was also strong during the first quarter, rising 3.2 percent. Analysts have attributed the jump to the large number of bonuses paid late last year to avoid the bite of higher taxes this year. Consumers spent that extra money in the first quarter, but that boost will disappear over the year. In fact, some data suggest households are already beginning to draw back as higher payroll taxes squeeze paychecks.

Meanwhile, defense spending has been a drag on growth for the past two years. A decade after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2011, America officially ended the war in Iraq and killed al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. President Obama also announced in 2011 a timeline for withdrawing from Afghanistan.

That shift in foreign policy is still trickling through the real economy. Compensation for military and civilian employees working in defense have fallen every quarter since 2012. Major contractors such as Lockheed Martin have laid off or bought out hundreds of employees, including top executives, and consolidated facilities in recent years.

Defense procurement reached its height in 2008 at nearly \$400 billion for the year, and it has fallen steadily since. Last year, contract awards dropped 15 percent below the peak, after adjusting for inflation.

But many of those contracts are for complex weapons and machinery that can take years to build. The GDP report does not count them as government purchases until they are actually delivered. In other words, much of the slowdown in contract awards is only now showing up as a decline in government spending. That also means the Pentagon's \$500 billion in budget cuts required by the sequester could hold back GDP growth for years to come.

"If you're looking at earnings of defense companies, you're not going to see a hit on that for a while as a result of sequestration," said Todd Harrison, a senior fellow in defense budget studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. Fairfax-based ManTech International is a prime example of the effect of wartime spending reductions. The contractor depended heavily on battlefield work and has seen significant financial declines. Its 2012 profit of \$95 million was down nearly 30 percent from 2011.

Now the company is also facing cuts from sequestration. In an earnings call in February, as the deadline for implementation loomed, top executives highlighted the uncertainty of its impact on their bottom line.

"Nobody has a crystal ball on what's going to happen with sequestration," Chief Financial Officer Kevin M. Phillips said. "We're taking a conservative view based on the uncertainty. . . . Does it cover the worst-case scenario? There's no ability to tell right now." (Ylan Q. Mui and Marjorie Censer, *The Washington Post*, April 26, 2013)

Is France the next sick man of Europe?

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Ever since last month's disclosure that ex-budget minister Jerome Cahuzac lied about stashing almost \$800,000 in a secret Swiss bank account, the French have become obsessed by their politicians' money. So as they sat down to their croissants and cafe au lait on Tuesday morning, many were gratified to be able to delve into the personal finances of their government's ministers for the first time.

That's because members of the Socialist government have been obliged to post their assets online, thanks to a political clean-up campaign by President Francois Hollande.

Among the revelations, voters discovered Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius is the richest cabinet member with \$7.2 million in assets, including a Paris apartment, a house in Normandy and \$1.7 million in shares. Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault is the proud owner of a 1988 Volkswagen microbus valued at \$1,300. And Finance Minister Pierre Moscovici has saved a mere \$350,000 during his long political career.

The Cahuzac scandal may have lifted the lid on the wealth of officials Hollande had promised on taking office would be clean and "exemplary." However, France's neighbors are far more worried about the country's finances.

"France's public sector indebtedness represents a vulnerability, not only for the country itself but also for the euro area as a whole," European Union headquarters warned last week.

As Hollande tries to extricate himself from political scandal, the economy is in deeper trouble than many had believed. And the unusually blunt language from Brussels underscores fears that unless he manages to get it back into shape, the euro zone's second-largest economic power could bring down the whole bloc.

"France is a core country in terms of its size and its geo-economic position," EU Economic Affairs Commissioner Olli Rehn told a news conference last week. "Its health has a very direct impact on the overall health of the euro zone."

Markets have generally been kind to France throughout the euro crisis, treating it alongside Germany as one of Europe's virtuous northern members. Its "spread" — the difference between the interest Paris has to pay on key government bonds and the benchmark German rate — is just 0.5 percent.

In contrast, southern European countries have seen the markets push their borrowing costs far above the German level. Italy's spread is at 3 percent, Spain's at 3.5 percent, Portugal's at 5 percent and Greece's, 10.2.

France has never been close to levels likely to raise fears that it can no longer finance itself and might require a bailout. However, some of the country's numbers have a distinctly southern feel.

The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday forecast France would slip into recession this year after zero growth in 2012. Unemployment is rising steadily and scheduled to top 11 percent next year.

Public finances are getting worse. The government missed deficit targets last year and is expected to fail again in 2013. At 4.6 percent, its deficit last year was 40 times higher than Germany's, way above Italy's and close to that of bailed-out Portugal. National debt has soared since the early 2000s, rising from 56 percent of economic output in 2001 to the 93.4 percent forecast for this year. Last week's EU report warned of declining competitiveness, labor market rigidity, falling exports and rising labor costs. French companies have the lowest profit margins in the euro zone. "The resilience of the country to external shocks is diminishing and its medium-term growth prospects are increasingly hampered by long-standing imbalances," the European Commission warned.

Hollande has tried to address the problems since he came to power almost a year ago by launching reforms to cut labor costs, reducing bureaucratic hurdles for business and encouraging innovative investment. But he is caught between campaign promises and economic realities. Before his election, the president pledged to fight against Europe's austerity orthodoxy. Plans included cutting the retirement age, slapping the rich with a 75 percent income tax, hiring tens of thousands of public school teachers and protecting the 35-hour working week limit along with other cherished social standards. But none of that is doing much to attract foreign investment away from rivals in Asia and Central Europe, or reducing government spending — which is the highest in the euro zone at 56 percent of GDP.

German and EU officials are urging deeper reforms, but with his popularity ratings already at a record low of 26 percent due largely to rising unemployment, Hollande is reluctant to upset his Socialist base by pushing unpopular liberalization measures. "Among the ruling party, there is no consensus on what should be done," says Tomasz Michalski, associate economics professor at the leading French business school HEC Paris. "That's why it looks so inept." Michalski sees little sign Hollande's government is ready to tackle the "horrendous" level of public spending or scrap a "Byzantine" system of bureaucracy, subsidies and vested interests.

"This government is going to drift and do the absolute minimum necessary hoping there's going to be some external adjustment, some external demand that's going to lift growth in France," he said in an interview.

Although Hollande has stressed the need to get serious with reform, he's been deeply skeptical about Europe's ability to recover while it's being force-fed a diet of unadulterated austerity.

"We need to get growth going again in Europe, austerity can't be the only policy envisaged," the president told a news conference in Paris last week. "The policy I'm driving forward is one that permits us to avoid austerity, to revive growth, but it has to be serious." Hollande's aversion to austerity has helped push him apart from German Chancellor Angela Merkel, just as the gap has grown between the French and German economies. That presents a double danger for Europe. Political differences between the euro zone's two big powers will weaken the chances of finding consensus over long-term solutions to the euro zone crisis — through tighter banking and budget rules or greater economic burden sharing, for example. At the same time, a moribund French economy would be a dead weight too heavy for the euro zone to carry. The risk of long-term French stagnation while the German economy pulls ahead could place unbearable strains on a relationship that's at the heart of European integration. "The success of the euro zone depends on France performing well," Michalski says. But with no end in sight to the cycle of French economic decline and political estrangement, the euro's outlook looks set only to worsen. (Paul Ames, *Global Post*, April 18, 2013)

Monetary Fund Chief Warns Against '3-Speed' Recovery

Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, called for moving the world into a "full-speed recovery" at a news conference on Thursday at the opening of the fund's annual spring meetings with its sister institution, the World Bank. Ms. Lagarde, echoing an earlier warning, expressed concern about what she called a "three-speed" global economy, with developing nations growing rapidly, the United States healing faster than most other advanced industrial countries, but Europe continuing to suffer from insufficient demand and incomplete government policies. "It's not the healthiest recovery," Ms. Lagarde said. But "we believe that we have avoided the worst, and the economic world no longer looks quite as dangerous as it did."

She added: "The pickup in financial conditions, financial markets, is clearly not translating into a sustained pickup in growth and jobs." The news conference came shortly after news broke that a French court had ordered Ms. Lagarde to appear at a hearing on her handling of a financial scandal during her time as finance minister in Paris. Asked about the affair at the news conference, Ms. Lagarde said that she had known of the possibility of being interviewed by the investigative commission for years. "There is nothing new under the sun," Ms. Lagarde said, dismissing any concerns that the inquiry would affect her position as the head of the I.M.F. "I will be very happy to travel for a couple of days to Paris. I look forward to it." The investigation, which led to a police raid of Ms. Lagarde's apartment in Paris last month, concerns her decision in 2007 to refer to an arbitration panel a decades-old dispute between Bernard Tapie, a wealthy friend of France's president at the time, Nicolas Sarkozy, and the state-owned bank Cr dit Lyonnais. The panel ultimately brokered a settlement that awarded Mr. Tapie, the flamboyant former owner of the Olympique Marseille soccer team, about \$580 million, including interest.

The court's summons of Ms. Lagarde could lead to the opening of a formal investigation of her role in the affair. But in France, being placed under formal investigation does not necessarily lead to charges and does not imply a presumption of guilt. Ms. Lagarde has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing in the Tapie matter. At the news conference, Ms. Lagarde gave her blessing to recent actions taken by the Bank of Japan to help bolster growth. She also said that the European Central Bank had more room to aid the recovery in Europe, where many countries are still undergoing economic contraction, unemployment is still rising and the credit markets remain broken.

"Of all the major central banks in the world, the E.C.B. is the only one who clearly still has room to maneuver," Ms. Lagarde said. Asked if Spain needed more time for fiscal adjustment, Ms. Lagarde replied that it did. She added that the country needed to put a budget-tightening plan in motion, but that it need not be "upfront, heavy duty" fiscal consolidation. At a separate news conference, Jim Yong Kim, the head of the World Bank, which focuses on economic development, laid out his vision for a "two-pronged approach for a world free of poverty." Dr. Kim has called for eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 and for fostering income growth for the bottom 40 percent in every country. "For that second goal," he said, "we also mean sharing prosperity across generations, and that calls for bold action on climate change." (Annie Lowrey, *International Herald Tribune*, April 18, 2013)

Spain Is Beyond Doomed: The 2 Scariest Unemployment Charts Ever

Spain is in a great depression, and it is one of the most terrifying things I have ever seen.

Five years after its housing boom turned to bust, Spanish unemployment hit a record high of 27.2 percent in the first quarter of 2013. It's almost too horrible to comprehend, but 19.5 percent *of the total workforce* has not had a job in the past six months; 15.3 percent have not in the past year; and 9.2 percent have not in the past two years. You can see this 1930s-style catastrophe in the chart below from the National Statistics Institute.

Here's the story of Spanish unemployment in three acts. During the boom, joblessness was relatively high due to persistent structural problems. Then it shot up fast and faster as Spain's building bust and then Lehman's hit in 2008. But it has kept climbing up since the panic abated, albeit at a less catastrophic pace, due to the toxic combination of too tight money and budgets. In other words, austerity hasn't been the path to prosperity. It's been the path to perma-slump. But the real story of the Spanish depression has been the story of the indignados: the mostly young, long-term unemployed. It's a bit hard to see just how dramatic it [the unemployment] has been. . . .

Almost all of the increase in unemployment since 2010 has been due to the increase in long-term unemployment of two years or more. In other words, unemployment is a trap people fall into, but can't fall out of. Indeed, the rate of *new* unemployment has stabilized at a terrible, but not quite-as-terrible, level. . . . But the steadily rising of the number of unemployed of more than two years, shows us that the rate of job-finding for the jobless has collapsed. That is what a permanent underclass looks like.

Housing Lows and Hiring Laws Feed a Disaster

Why has Spain's jobs depression been so great? After all, its GDP is "only" 4.1 percent below its 2007 level, compared to 5.8 percent below for Portugal, 7 percent below for Italy, and 20 percent below for Greece. But despite this better (negative) growth, unemployment is higher in Spain than the others. In other words, Spanish unemployment isn't just about inadequate demand. Part of it is structural.

Spain's labor market problems fall into two big buckets: too much regulation, and not enough education. It's almost impossible for companies to get rid of older workers, which creates a horribly bifurcated labor market. There are permanent workers who can't be fired, and temporary ones who can – and are. Indeed, as [Clive Crook](#) points out, about a third of Spain's workforce are temporary workers who enjoy few protections and fewer opportunities. Companies go through these younger workers without bothering to invest much in their human capital, because why would they? These temporary workers will be let go at the first sign of economic trouble. Young people get stuck in a never-ending cycle of under-and-unemployment since firms are always hesitant to hire permanent workers who will always be on their books. But it gets worse. The housing bust hasn't just cast a shadow over household and bank balance sheets; it's cast one over young people's educations too. At its peak, building made up a whopping 19 percent of Spain's economy, which, as [Tobias Buck](#) of the *Financial Times* points out, lured many young men into dropping out of school for well-paying construction gigs. But now that building has gone into hibernation, all of those young men are left with no work and no education to fall back on. And, again, even if they can find temporary jobs, it's not as if the companies will spend money to develop their skills.

No Hope

It's hard to see anything resembling a case for optimism. Even though the Spanish government's borrowing costs have fallen since the ECB introduced its backstop, [Spanish corporate borrowing costs have not](#). Businesses can't get capital except on prohibitively expensive terms. As [Ryan Avent](#) of *The Economist* points out, this broken monetary transmission mechanism means austerity is hurting Spain more than it otherwise would -- which is clear enough in the data. Despite its cuts, Spain's deficit actually worsened from 9.4 percent of GDP in 2011 to [10.6 percent of GDP in 2012](#), because its economy fell more than its borrowing costs. The only hint of good news here is Spain just announced it will take [two more years to hit its deficit target](#). But less (self-defeating) austerity isn't enough. Spain needs stimulus. And it might need bailouts (or, if Cyprus does [turn out to be a "template"](#), bail-ins). Indeed, *The Economist* calculates Spanish housing prices are [still overvalued by 20 percent](#) or so -- which will be even more bad news for its banks. I wasn't exaggerating when I said this is one of the most terrifying things I have ever seen. Spain needs shock therapy for its labor markets, but that's an impossible political sell when more than a quarter of the population is unemployed. In an ideal world, Spain would pair major reforms with major stimulus; in the real world, it will drag its feet on reforms, try to cut its deficit, and fall deeper into depression. Let me leave you with this depressing question: Assuming everything goes perfectly, how long will it be till Spanish unemployment gets below 20 percent? Don't answer that. (Matthew O'Brien, *The Atlantic*, April 26, 2013)

The Unluckiest Generation: What Will Become of Millennials?

Coming of age in a recession has set back Millennials for decades. The good news? In the age of abundance, they could turn out to be pretty great decades, anyway.

The nearly 3.7 million American babies born in 1982 weren't special, except to their families. But in the eyes of demographers, they were categorically different from the 3.6 million Americans born in 1981. They were the first members of a new club: Generation Y. This so-called millennial cohort, the largest generation in American history, landed in the cradle during an awful recession, learned to walk during the Reagan recovery, came of age in the booming 1990s, and entered the labor market after the Sept. 11 attacks and before the Great Recession, the two tragedies of the early 21st century. They've survived an eventful few decades. Yet nothing in those vertiginous 30 years could have prepared them for the economic sledgehammer that followed the collapse of the housing market in 2007-08. And the aftereffects, economists fear, may dog them for the rest of their working lives.

Generation Y is the most educated in American history, but its education came at a price. Average debt for graduates of public universities doubled between 1996 and 2006. Students chose to take it on because they expected to find a job that paid it off; instead, they found themselves stranded in the worst economy in 80 years. Young people who skipped college altogether have faced something worse: depressed wages in a global economy that finds it easier than ever to replace jobs with technology or to move them overseas. Finding a good job as a young adult has always been a game of chance. But more and more, the rules have changed: Heads, you lose; tails, you're disqualified. The unemployment rate for young people scraped 18 percent in 2010, and in the past five years, real wages have fallen for millennials--and only for millennials.

Adulthood, Deferred

It costs a lot to be a grown-up. It means more than saying "please" or holding doors for the elderly, although those are nice to do. It also means moving out of your parents' home, renting a place of your own, paying for food and clothes, buying a car, getting married, having children, buying a house--all the trappings and expenses of a middle-class life.

These life stages drive a consumer economy. "Housing IS the Business Cycle" is the memorably brief title of a 2007 study by University of California (Los Angeles) economist Edward E. Leamer showing that the housing market both presages recessions and bolsters recoveries. A generation that buys new homes is a generation that pushes the economy forward. But millennials have responded with a collective "No, thanks." Or at least "Not yet." More than one in five Americans ages 18-34 told Pew Research Center pollsters last year that they've postponed having a baby "because of the bad economy." The same proportion said they were holding off marriage until the economy recovered. More than a third of 25- to 29-year-olds had moved back in with their parents. Millennials have been scorned as perma-children, forever postponing adulthood, or labeled with that most un-American of character flaws: helplessness. The case for pessimism is depressingly easy to make. Even after the economy recovers, the penalty for graduating into a recession may still apply to young people's wages. When Lisa Kahn, an economist at Yale, studied how the 1981-82 recession affected the lifetime earnings of young workers who graduated during the 1980s, she found that for every percentage-point increase in total unemployment, the starting incomes of new graduates slipped by as much as 7 percent. Two decades later, because of their bad timing, these graduates had taken a \$100,000 hit to their cumulative earnings. If this pattern applies to millennials, the consequences will be grim for an economy that relies on big-ticket items such as houses and cars. Half of a typical family's spending goes to transportation and housing. But Americans ages 21-34 bought only 27 percent of the new vehicles sold in the United States in 2010, compared with 38 percent in 1985; from 2008 to '11, only half as many young Americans as a decade earlier acquired their first mortgage. Having been rejected by the economy, millennials are in turn rejecting cars and houses--the pillars of the modern consumer economy.

Life Gets Better (and Cheaper)

Still, do millennials really count as the unluckiest generation since World War II? It's true that wages haven't grown this

slowly in decades, and globalization and technology have held down wages for millions of young workers to an unprecedented extent. But in some ways, millennials are also the luckiest.

For one thing, they're living in an age of affordable abundance. Food has never been cheaper as a share of the typical American family budget. The price of apparel is also falling relative to wages. The Internet, while no substitute for gainful employment, has made many things cheaper that used to take extra income to buy--communication, notably, including private information-sharing and professional collaboration. It has made casual retail cheaper (and more convenient). It has also made mass entertainment cheaper, especially music and amateur videos. These commodities have grown cheaper, in part, by replacing and lowering the cost of human work.

That we live in a golden era of cheap essentials and entertainment might register as cold statistical comfort for the millions of unemployed millennials who watch their dreams fade with every passing year. This group can hope for another mitigating factor: time. The U.S. economy is expected to continue its recovery--unemployment falling, wages rising, debts slowly getting repaid, life going on as it did before 2008. In an economy that is now creating 200,000 private-sector jobs a month, the total debt held by young adults has shrunk to its lowest level in 15 years.

Even if millennials haven't read about these trends, they seem to feel them in their bones. The Pew study that found twentysomethings moving back home also reported that nine in 10 millennials said they already earn (or have) enough money, or expect to in the future. If optimism has any currency, the millennials may well outgrow their miserable circumstances and bequeath to their own children a more prosperous nation than their parents left for them. They're the best-educated generation in American history, moving into their prime working years while home prices remain fairly cheap. Is that so unlucky?

Still, their timing couldn't be unluckier. The past 30 years have seen enduring income stagnation capped by an economic collapse. Average household wealth nearly doubled between 1983 and 2010, the Urban Institute recently found, but younger generations shouldn't expect the same. They already lag their parents in wealth (by 7 percent) at the equivalent age, and "now, stagnant wages, diminishing job opportunities, and lost home values may be merging to paint a vastly different future for Gen X and Gen Y," Eugene Steuerle and three coauthors concluded. "Despite their relative youth, they may not be able to make up the lost ground." (Derek Thompson, *The Atlantic*, April 26, 2013)

Long-term unemployment is our most urgent crisis, and we're doing nothing about it. In fact, Congress can barely be bothered to even talk about it.

As [Niraj Chokshi](#) of *National Journal* reports, only four lawmakers showed up for the Congressional hearing on long-term unemployment on Wednesday. And three of them got there late.

In Congress' defense, there is a [new Bowles-Simpson plan](#) out.

For the first time since the 1930s, there are millions of people who want work who can't find it, no matter how long they look. That's what happens when a downturn goes too long and a recovery doesn't go far enough. You can see that depressingly enough in the chart below that compares job openings and layoffs the past decade (which is as far back as the data goes). After Lehman failed, and it looked like everyone might need to brush up on their farming skills, there were more people getting fired each month than there were jobs available. But even after the panic passed, the jobs have been slow to return given the depth of the hole. Look at how few job openings there were six months after Lehman's collapse. It was just incredibly tough for people who got laid off during the depth of the crisis to find work soon afterwards -- or even years later. The chart below, via [Megan McArdle](#), shows the cumulative effect of our horribly dysfunctional labor market: there were over 6.5 unemployed people per job opening in 2009, and that dismal ratio has since only gradually declined to something approximating a less complete disaster.

In other words, there are lots of people who have been out of work for six months or longer who only made the mistake of losing their job at the wrong time. But that's unfortunately been enough to make them finding a new job a long shot. Something happens when you've been out of work for half a year. Employers ignore you completely. That was the conclusion of a [new field study by Rand Ghayad](#), a visiting scholar at the Boston Fed and a PhD candidate at Northeastern University, that showed that resumes with otherwise identical qualifications get called back far less if they list six months of unemployment. As [Matt Yglesias](#) points out, the problem is this kind of statistical discrimination against the long-term unemployed is pretty rational. Companies with a big stack of resumes to get through (which is all of them nowadays) will still have more than enough strong candidates left over if they screen out the long-term jobless, who presumably would have gotten a job before if they themselves were strong candidates. Now, this heuristic makes sense, but it makes less sense in the aftermath of the worst crisis in 80 years -- and much less sense on a macro level. After all, it makes us collectively poorer if the long-term unemployed become unemployable. What is to be done about this unemployment trap? Well, there are two possible policy approaches: macro or micro. In other words, trying to reduce unemployment in general, or long-term unemployment in particular. [Mike Konczal](#), for one, thinks we should just focus on the economy, stupid, since nothing helps the long-term unemployed like a tighter labor market. As you can see in his chart below, people out of work for a year or more were 40 to 80 percent more likely to get a job during the tech boom as they are today. This is true, but being true isn't enough. It's not as if Congress is about to do more fiscal stimulus anytime soon or the Fed is about to do much more monetary stimulus beyond its already open-ended easing. In the meantime, long-term unemployment threatens to consign people to lives permanently at the fringes of the labor market. We can't wait for more stimulus.

There are some smaller-bore things we can and should do to help the long-term unemployed. Indeed, that's exactly what the sparsely-attended Congressional hearing was about. Former Romney economic adviser and current American Enterprise Institute fellow [Kevin Hassett](#) thinks it's time for a whatever-it-takes approach. Practically-speaking, that means the government should introduce work-sharing programs like Germany's [Kurzarbeit](#), give businesses tax incentives to hire the long-term jobless, and hire the long-term jobless itself if nobody else will. Congressional Republicans probably wouldn't go along with this last idea, but the first two are the kind of thing that, in a sane world, *shouldn't* be ideologically polarizing. Now, these kind of targeted policies would admittedly only help at the margins, but helping at the margins is better than not helping at all. (Or, in the case of the sequester, actively hurting). More stimulus and more direct help for the long-term unemployed are two great tastes that go great together. Either or both would be a welcome change from our malign neglect of the urgent crisis all around us. (Matthew O'Brien, *The Atlantic*, April 25, 2013)

National

What Wayne Swan won't say tonight in his Budget 2013 delivery

TWO months ago I suggested Wayne Swan try [Labor Treasurer] something different in this year's Budget and tell the truth. I have put together a draft of the speech that might be useful for this purpose. It goes something like this: Mr Speaker, I guess by now you have all figured out I don't know what I'm doing. That awful truth has finally dawned on me as well. I hadn't been too good before, but last year's budget was the one where I totally blew myself up - you remember? It was May 8. I thought I needed a dramatic opening. So I began by saying: "The four years of surpluses I announce tonight ... " No one heard the rest of the sentence because of the guffaws from the other side. That smart Alec Costello called it some of the best stand-up comedy ever delivered in the House of Representatives. But the thing is I really believed it. I'm not good at numbers - of the financial kind. As state secretary of the Queensland ALP I used to run numbers for party ballots. But the outcome was always fixed in advance. I thought that's how you did budgets. I was just getting into my stride when I declared that Labor's core purpose was: "To share the tremendous benefits of the mining boom." We were going to do this with a company tax cut starting from July 1 this year but I cancelled that in last year's budget. Also we were going to restore the Liberals' contribution levels for superannuation but I postponed that in last year's budget. And last year I said we would give \$1.8 billion to families in more generous payments from July 1 this year. But I'm cancelling that in this year's Budget. That's the thing about my budgets. I do take up a lot of time cancelling what I've announced before.

Anyway, there are only so many billion-dollar packages that you can fund out of a tax that raises \$126 million. That Resources Super Profits Tax (RSPT) has shown me no R-E-S-P-E-C-T. When I announced it, I said it would raise \$9 billion in the forthcoming year - whoops! I had high hopes for that tax. I called it "the greatest economic change in our lifetime". Of course I had no idea what I was saying but the Liberals are always going on about GST which raises \$50 billion per year so I thought I had better lodge my nomination for the greatest tax "reform" ever.

Last year, I came home with a wet sail declaring: "The deficit years are behind us. The surplus years are here."

Looks like I got the words the wrong way around. I should have said that the surpluses were behind us and the deficit years are here. But I did so want to balance one budget before losing office. I've been thinking about who to blame. For the first few budgets I blamed the financial crisis. But that was five years ago and we've been through a mining boom since then. Now I'm blaming the high dollar although someone in the Treasury told me last year's budget forecasts were based on the dollar being just where it is. I'm desperate that people don't think it's my overspending because that is something I could have controlled. So we've been on a media blitz to say it's an unexpected revenue shortfall. In April, I said the revenue was down \$7.5 billion. A week later Julia said it was down \$12 billion. Then Penny went out last week to say it was down \$17 billion. I leaked out a Treasury briefing on the weekend to say we were \$26 billion down. How do you reconcile all these figures? Well, it beats me and I hope it beats all of you because that is the whole point - to try to cloud the issue.

At least no one in the press ever asks me to explain what these forecasts are "down" against. Because the truth is they are down on the false forecasts I made last year. Get it? I am not the victim of these downgrades, I am the culprit. Every time I downgrade, it just illustrates again how wrong I got it last year. I know we can always rely on the ABC, but the thing that amazes me about those other guys in the press is they keep writing what I say - as if that is going to happen (LOL). How many times do you have to get it wrong before they start to see there is a pattern?

I want people to think I am cutting costs. I've told you every budget that I am about to do that. But when I see a state premier who is really cutting costs - like Campbell Newman -- I just take cheap shots. That's my default position, to attack expenditure restraint. As well as cutting expenditure I also want you to think I am increasing it - on NDIS and Gonski. Last year I told you the most important thing for our economy was to balance the budget and this year I am telling you to do so would damage jobs. So how do I reconcile all this? Well I can't. And I don't have to because on September 14 I'm handing it all over to the Liberals. That's their job: to clean up my mess.

(Peter Costello [Liberal treasurer from 1996 to 2007], *The Daily Telegraph*, May 14, 2013)

Nile ditches O'Farrell over gay marriage line

Fred Nile has pulled his crucial support for state government legislation after Premier Barry O'Farrell's public comments in favour of same-sex marriage. In a letter sent to Mr O'Farrell on Monday night, Mr Nile said he was "very upset at the Premier's public support for homosexual marriage and his challenge to Tony Abbott's rejection of a conscience vote on the Homosexual Marriage Bill. "Our Christian Democratic Party will withdraw its support for O'Farrell legislation until his challenges to Tony Abbott's policy cease."

The Premier last week said he had changed his mind on the issue and now believes same-sex marriage should be given legal status under the federal Marriage Act. Mr O'Farrell also said the Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott, should allow a conscience vote on the issue. "The Premier needs to show some loyalty to Tony Abbott," Mr Nile said.

Mr O'Farrell came out publicly in favour of same-sex marriage after the New Zealand Parliament voted to change its laws. "My view - a view that I've come to in recent years - is that as a Liberal who believes that commitment and family units are one of the best ways in which society is organised, I support the concept of same-sex marriage," Mr O'Farrell said. Asked about Mr Abbott's position, Mr O'Farrell argued Federal Parliament "ought to reflect the community and allow same-sex marriage. I think in coming to that decision the Federal Parliament should do so by way of a conscience vote across all parties." The O'Farrell government has been dependent on Mr Nile's vote to pass legislation to privatise state electricity assets. A NSW upper house inquiry is considering whether the state is constitutionally able to legalise same-sex marriage. In November, a cross-party working group gave notice it would introduce the State Marriage Equality Bill to the upper house. Last May the NSW upper house voted 22-16 in favour of a motion supporting same-sex equality, but many believe any attempt to legalise same-sex marriage would be defeated in the lower house. (Anna Patty, *SMH*, April 24, 2013)

Carjacking victim thought he might die

A carjacking victim has spoken of the chilling moment his captor fired a bullet just inches from his head and declared: "I'll f---ing shoot you if I have to." Still badly shaken from his 200-kilometre trip of terror at the hands of a pistol-wielding carjacker on Saturday, Darlington Point man Alfio Maugeri told *The Area News* he feared he may never see his wife and two children again. Mr Maugeri was driving home from his shift in the fruit and vegetables department of Woolworths Griffith

about 3.45pm when he came across the man standing in the middle of Old Willbriggie Road, near the intersection with Hanwood Avenue.

"I just thought, what's this guy doing, does he need help?" Mr Maugeri said. "I pulled over and asked if he needed something and he wanted a lift to Wagga. I said I was going as far as the Point and he said, 'that'll do'." He said the man appeared "pretty normal" at first but his behaviour changed dramatically once Mr Maugeri turned onto the Kidman Way. "He pulled out a gun and ordered me to drive to Wagga," Mr Maugeri said.

"It was just a feeling of instant terror. Your heart starts beating out of your chest and you just think, 'what the hell?' "My instant reaction was just to do whatever he wanted me to." The carjacker's demeanour then switched between threatening and friendly, he said. "He kept saying he was desperate, that he wasn't a bad guy but that he'd had a lot of bad luck," Mr Maugeri said. "At one stage I pulled over and said he could have the keys, he could just take my car, but he insisted I keep driving." The gun, a loaded pistol, was sitting on the man's lap for the two-hour trip.

"He kept reiterating he wouldn't hurt me provided I did what he said," Mr Maugeri said. But it took just one ill-timed comment by Mr Maugeri to send the carjacker into a rage. "He kept saying this was the only way he could get to Wagga and I stupidly said back to him 'ever heard of a bus?'," Mr Maugeri said. "He grabbed the gun, wound down my window and fired a shot out of the car to prove he had ammo in the gun. "Then he said to me, 'I'll f---ing shoot you if I have to.'" After almost two hours, the car, a Ford Fairmont, arrived at Wagga Wagga and the carjacker directed Mr Maugeri to Travers Street. "He got out of the car, said 'thanks mate', and shook my hand," Mr Maugeri said. "The second he shut that door I took off and drove to Wagga Police Station." He said he was still coming to grips with what had happened. "You just go on to auto-pilot; I think I'm still in shock," he said. "But you've got to get on with life. I've got the support of my wife, Stacey, and my two kids and that makes all the difference."

A massive police manhunt has failed to track down the carjacker and Mr Maugeri has pleaded with anyone who saw the man to contact authorities. "Even if it was only something really small they saw, police need to know," he said. "I want my day in court; I want to be able to look him in the eye." The carjacker is described as caucasian and aged in his early 30s, about 180-185 centimetres tall with a solid build, shoulder-length black hair and about a month's growth of facial hair. He was wearing a blue and white chequered shirt and faded blue jeans at the time.

Anyone with information should call Griffith Police on 6969 4299 or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000. (Daniel Johns, *SMH*, April 23, 2013)

Now the mud sticks to both sides

Tony Abbott is pushing his pedals between Adelaide and Geelong this week, feeling pretty chuffed about putting in a decent performance on the ABC's 7.30 program last Wednesday. He was on message, disciplined and, as usual, pretty light with details. The same can't be said of the rabid social media commentators who took it upon themselves to critique not Abbott's performance, but that of the show's presenter Leigh Sales. As interviews go it was somewhat pedestrian - no killer question or knockout punch. Yet because Abbott emerged from the 13-minute conversation unscathed, some blamed Sales. That's probably to be expected and there is nothing wrong with an interviewer's performance being discussed publicly. What was alarming about the Twitter debate following Abbott's appearance was its ugly tenor. Elements of the left thought it just fine to describe Sales in abusive and sexist terms because her grilling of Abbott did not meet their expectations. It's not OK, yet the debate rolled on for most of the week sending mixed messages about what the left is up to right now. Have they resorted to antics more often employed by the far right? Sales was accused, in some instances with very vile language, of being too easy on Abbott and even biased towards him. How soon they forget. Last August Sales had Abbott not only on the ropes, but flat out on the mat and wishing for an early end to the bout. During the August interview, Sales got Abbott to admit he hadn't read a BHP statement he wrongly claimed was blaming the carbon tax for the suspension of the Olympic Dam mining project.

Abbott haters were more than pleased with that exchange, leaving the right angry and feverishly circulating their own nasty claims of bias. But now it's the left that is furious. The commentary says more, however, about where the left is at psychologically as a movement. Facing the likelihood of a conservative government and a Prime Minister Abbott, parts of the left have taken to desperate gutter tactics. They seem to be now insisting that media interviewers push their cause and help prevent a Coalition victory in September.

Meanwhile, Julia Gillard's ability to win over the electorate remains far from where she and her party would like it to be, but Labor MPs have mostly resolved they must now fall in behind her. As obvious a statement as that might be, it is only over this past week that most inside Labor have reached that conclusion.

Just two weeks ago there were rumblings Gillard would be facing renewed leadership pressure before the election. The possibly honourable, but certainly kamikaze move by Simon Crean last month in calling for a spill sent him to the backbench. But it also fuelled speculation he would throw his own hat into the leadership ring in the near future. Even as Gillard's new frontbenchers were moving into their ministerial offices, word was getting around to some that their reward for loyalty to the PM would not last long. They were not referring to the likelihood of losing government in September, the message was that a post-budget leadership challenge was on the cards and the old frontbench would be back to reclaim some jobs. The leadership contender? None other than Crean. That's what the previous Rudd backers and some wider anti-Gillard ALP forces were planning. They considered Crean would be a "safe pair of hands" after a budget they expect won't go down too well with voters. It seems cooler heads have prevailed, probably with the realisation that if Crean couldn't mobilise numbers behind Rudd, he most likely wouldn't be able to muster up a majority for himself. At least voting Australians now have another choice, thanks to Queensland's billionaire mining magnate Clive Palmer, who declared on Friday he wanted to be Australia's next PM. But then said he didn't. Chances are he won't. (Chris Johnson, *The Sun Herald*, April 28, 2013)

Teachers taught to ground helicopters

More than 90 per cent of school professionals now encounter "helicopter parents" in their work.

In response, many school principals are introducing policies to help manage over-involved parents.

The formal guidelines outline appropriate times to contact teachers and principals, how long they should expect to wait for a response, access to classrooms, and how to make an appointment with a teacher.

Some schools are also giving teachers "how to land a helicopter parent" training, while others hold workshops for new parents to educate them about the appropriate level of involvement in their child's education.

"You need a formal, 'whole of school' practice around how to deal with [helicopter parents]," Australian Primary Principals Association president Norm Hart said. "It's perfectly appropriate for schools to set these guidelines. Most of the time, parents respond pretty well to clear guidelines." The pressure is particularly acute for novices. A report by the Australian Council for Educational Research found the majority of graduate teachers surveyed felt underprepared to deal with parents when they started working. NSW Secondary Principals' Council president Lila Mularczyk said it was "in the best interests" of schools and parents to have set protocols for their interactions, particularly since the advent of email, mobile and texting. "Parents who actively want to contribute to their child's education need to understand what is the best way to do that," Ms Mularczyk, the principal of Merrylands High, said.

Australian Secondary Schools Principals Association president Sheree Vertigan said schools want parents to be engaged in their child's education but not to the extent that they send text messages to their children in the middle of the day. "It's frustrating when kids are sitting in class, suddenly their mobile phone goes off, and it's a parent dropping off their sandwich at the front desk who wants to meet them," she said. "As young adults, these kids need to learn how to take care of themselves." Clinical psychologist Judith Locke, who is researching a PhD on helicopter parenting, said it was often good for schools to wait a while to respond to parental concerns. "Often the child is completely over the issue while the parent is still holding on to the concern ... Parents will ring demanding to speak to the principal about a minor thing. Schools have to stop that, otherwise principals will be dealing with that all day."

The backlash against helicopter parenting has also spawned a new style of parent - the drone, who watches their children from afar rather than hover over every move. But "the parent you never see is just as much a problem as the parent you see too often", Mr Hart said. "Usually both parents are working, they're both committed to more than nine to three, they haven't got a lot of time to be in school with the child."

Rules for parents

Expect to wait 24 hours for a response to an email.

If the matter is urgent, ring the school office.

Don't call or text your child's mobile during class time.

Don't call or text your child's teacher directly.

Make an appointment to discuss an issue with a teacher, don't accost them at the start or end of the school day.

Leave the classroom when the first bell rings.

Don't discuss your concerns with administration staff. (Cosima Marriner, *The Sun-Herald*, April 28, 2013)

International

As Europe crumbles, one plucky stayer, Poland, stands tall

VETERANS of European communism always have a store of jokes about that hateful old hag of an ideology.

Radoslaw Sikorski, Poland's erudite, impressive, young Foreign Minister, is no exception. I remark to him that communism as an ideology failed both in theory and in practice. He replies: "We had a joke. Why were Marxists not scientists? Because if they had been scientists they would have tried their experiments on rats first." And then: "What is communism? The longest road from capitalism to capitalism."

Sikorski is something of a Polish phenomenon. His family found refuge in England when he was young and he studied at Oxford and wrote for *The Spectator*. Later he worked for a US think tank before returning to democratic Poland and becoming a government minister. He is married to the renowned US chronicler of communism, Anne Applebaum. I meet him in the Polish consulate in Sydney as he makes an official visit to Australia and New Zealand.

Sikorski is one of the brilliant men of Europe, touted at times as a NATO secretary-general or for other high office within the EU, of which he is an ardent supporter. He has all kinds of ideas for Europe's future, and for Poland's. It is important to remember that Poland, a nation of 38 million, is a European success story. Since the global financial crisis, its economy has grown, cumulatively, by a whopping 19 per cent, whereas the eurozone average growth in that time is zero. But more of that later. I can't resist asking Sikorski about Poland's emergence from decades of communist rule. How did it manage to avoid the bitter internal polarisations that have characterised many other ex-communist nations? "It's like all post-revolutionary societies," he says, "some people feel the culprits of the old regime were not punished enough. But on the whole, the negotiated exit from communism was successful. Today, Poland is an example that others seem to want to learn from. Our speciality is the technology of transition."

Sikorski lists some of the distinctive features of his country's situation that helped it exit communism peacefully, with a functioning society intact. "The presence of the pope (the Pole, John Paul II) in the equation was useful," he says. "The Polish Catholic Church on the whole supported our return to the community of free nations. Then there was the enterprising spirit of the people. And the Polish diaspora was a factor in maintaining the sense of us as a Western nation." Former communists are active in Polish politics, some of them in leading positions in democratic parties and in the media. Does that indicate that communism had some degree of popular backing?

"Communism had some social support in the 1940s and 50s because the pre-war elites discredited themselves by losing the war so thoroughly," he says. The industrial quality of state violence and death under communism also produced a social base for it, partly by wiping out the alternative social base. Sikorski says: "Both Hitler and Stalin subjected Poland to ethnic cleansing. Stalinism in Poland meant a social revolution. There were new people who owed everything to communism. But economic failure destroyed its legitimacy." So how does he compare the two great evils of the 20th century, communism and Nazism, both of which wrought terrible harm to Poland?

"Communism was responsible for more corpses, not because it was worse but because it ruled for longer. There were similarities between the two, in the way they dehumanised their enemies. The technologies were similar. In Poland, both ideologies claimed their harvest of sorrow." Poles believe, Sikorski says, that they had something to do with bringing the Cold War to an end. Certainly, at the time of the fall of communism a number of Poles became the best known people on the planet, particularly John Paul II and Lech Walesa, the trade unionist who defied the Kremlin and its Polish stooges. Does

the national image forged at that time help Poland today? "I think we're known as a people that loves freedom. It's a useful image for some time. Of course, in the future we'd like to be known for our businessmen, our scientists, our sportsmen." Like any good Pole, Sikorski is happy to talk about the past - proudly reminding me that in the 17th century Poland prevented the unification of Europe under the banner of Islam. But really he is much more interested in the future.

Poland has had the best performing economy in Europe over the past few years. Poland is outside the eurozone, still with its own currency. Therefore, is Poland a pretty overwhelming argument for staying outside the common currency, keeping a distance from over-arching EU institutions? Sikorski doesn't think so. He is a big European. Somewhat counter-intuitively (if not downright eccentrically), Sikorski thinks the solution to the European crisis is more Europe, not less. After all, he points out, the second best-performing economy in Europe over that time is Slovenia, and it's a member of the eurozone. He has some other ready stats. If you combine government, corporate and private debt, Britain, which is outside the eurozone, has Europe's highest level of debt. And, as Spain showed, private debt can contribute to a crisis as much as government debt. The crisis is all about debt, he says, and it started in the US, which has a higher debt level than the European average. "I think European institutions are at the heart of the solutions. The crisis exploded before Europe was institutionally equipped to deal with it. So we've had to manage the crisis and develop the institutions simultaneously," Sikorski says. "We're almost there. We have a banking union; a mechanism for winding up insolvent banks; peer review of each others' budgets." He accepts that being outside the eurozone has allowed Poland some useful economic flexibility. It experienced a 30 per cent devaluation in 2009 and this was helpful. But, he says, "the sources of Poland's success are much deeper than that".

Warsaw undertook the necessary economic reforms before the crisis, liberalising its economy, imposing a 60 per cent debt ceiling. Now Europe is forcing other countries to make these same adjustments, he says. Greece is sacking civil servants, which is long overdue. It is one-quarter Poland's size and has twice as many civil servants.

But surely, I suggest, Greece was enabled to put off the day of reckoning by the access it got to cheap debt because of the German dominance of the European economy. One of Sikorski's disarming traits is his reasonableness. He is happy to acknowledge evidence which runs counter to his ideas: "It's true, they (Greece) hitched on to German credibility. That would have been the time to carry out reforms painlessly." A rather unpleasant parallel suggests itself to me here. A country with a small population gets a big income windfall from an external source - in Greece's case German credibility generating cheap debt, in some other country's case a massive rise in commodity export prices - and then that country spends all the windfall, gives itself benefits it can't sustain and squibs the necessary reforms.

Sound familiar?

Back to Poland. Sikorski believes the country will join the eurozone in a few years' time, when the currency area is more stable. He is a bit of a hawk on defence: "Being on the border concentrates the mind." He wants Europe to act more cohesively in security and trade to get the benefits of scale, especially when dealing with Asia.

He is a bit worried by political trends in Russia, and describes Poland's relations with Moscow as "pragmatic but brittle". Despite being an ultra-European he is still profoundly pro-US, citing Poland's contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan, made alongside Australia, as evidence of that friendship. He has only one complaint about Australia. We don't recognise Polish driver's licences. (Greg Sheridan, *The Australian*, May 04, 2013)

U.S. Fears Russia May Sell Air-Defense System to Syria

WASHINGTON — The United States, which is trying to bring Syrian rebels and the Syrian government to the negotiating table, is now increasingly worried that Russia plans to sell a sophisticated air defense system to Syria, American officials said Wednesday. Russia has a long history of selling arms to the Syrians and has a naval base in the country. But the delivery of the Russian S-300 missile batteries would represent a major qualitative advancement in Syria's air defenses. The system is regarded as highly effective and would limit the ability of the United States and other nations to operate over Syrian airspace or impose a no-fly zone. It is also able to track and fire missiles at multiple targets, including aircraft and some missiles.

"There are concerns that this might happen," said a senior United States official who spoke on the condition of anonymity, referring to the possible delivery of the S-300. A Western intelligence service has also warned that the Russians may soon send S-300 air defense batteries to Syria, said another American official who asked not to be identified because he was discussing intelligence reports. News of the possible Russian sale, which was first reported online by The Wall Street Journal on Wednesday evening, came less than a day after Secretary of State John Kerry sought to enlist Russia's help in facilitating a political transition that would supplant President Bashar al-Assad of Syria. Russia and Iran have supported Mr. Assad politically and have provided military support — support that American officials say has fortified Mr. Assad's determination to hang on to power.

American officials had been concerned that Russia might sell S-300 air defense batteries to Iran. But after the United States and Israel raised alarms, the weapons were not provided to the Iranians. While Syria's air defenses are formidable, Israel has successfully carried out three airstrikes to stop the suspected transfer of advanced weapons from Syria to Hezbollah. In carrying out its attacks, Israeli warplanes flew over neighboring Lebanon and fired air-to-ground weapons at their targets, American officials said. The possible S-300 sale comes as the United States and its allies are struggling to find a way to end the fighting in Syria, which has killed more than 70,000.

The White House announced Wednesday that Prime Minister David Cameron of Britain planned to meet with President Obama next Monday in Washington. One subject they will take up will be Syria, the White House noted in a statement. British and French officials have said that they hope to modify or do away with the European Union ban on arms sales to Syria, which has precluded Western European nations from providing weapons to the Syrian opposition. That embargo is scheduled to expire at the end of May. The Obama administration is also weighing expanding the modest level of nonlethal aid it is giving to the armed Syrian rebels.

Still, while the United States and its allies are seeking to bolster the Syrian opposition, American officials have said that only a negotiated political transition holds the promise of building an inclusive and stable Syria if Mr. Assad is deposed. To that end, the Americans have sought Russia's cooperation. Before his meeting with Mr. Putin on Tuesday, Mr. Kerry said that he hoped the two sides would find "common ground" on Syria. He made no mention of Russia's arms sales to Syria. (Michael R. Gordon, *International Herald Tribune*, May 8, 2013)

Syria Already Has Advanced Russian Missiles

Advanced Russian missile launchers that Israel was trying to prevent from falling into Syrian hands have already been transferred to President Bashar al-Assad's regime, the London-based Arabic-language *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* newspaper reported Tuesday. The report was published as Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu took off to Russia to convince President Vladimir Putin not to sell advanced Russian missile launchers to Syria.

According to the *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* report, 200 launchers for advanced anti-aircraft S-300 missiles are already in Syrian hands, and Syrian experts have been fully trained to use the launchers and no longer need Russian supervision. The report, cited by *JNS*, was attributed to a Syrian military official.

Israel fears that Syrian possession of the S-300 system, which is able to intercept drones and [cruise](#) missiles, will make future aerial offensives by the Jewish state more difficult, in addition to the possibility of Russian weaponry being obtained by the Hizbullah terror group. "Anyone who provides weaponry to terror organizations is siding with terror," Tourism Minister Uzi Landau said Monday, according to *JNS*. He accused Russia of destabilizing the Middle East by selling weapons to Syria.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that Israel had warned the United States that Russia plans to sell these advanced weapons to Syria, and that Netanyahu spoke with U.S. President Barack Obama to make him aware of the deal. Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, subsequently said his country is not planning to supply Syria with any weapons beyond the current contracts that are nearing completion.

Following their meeting Tuesday, Netanyahu and Putin spoke to the press, but Netanyahu did not indicate whether he succeeded in convincing Putin to halt arms supplies to Syria or whether the two leaders reached any firm agreements. Speaking to reporters, Netanyahu stressed that his country's task was to "defend its citizens."

"Together we are trying to find ways to strengthen stability and security, we have a remarkable opportunity to directly speak with each other," the Israeli premier was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies. Water and Energy Minister Silvan Shalom said on Monday that Netanyahu was "fully determined" to halt sales by Russia of advanced missiles to Syria. "Such a sale to Syria would alter the balance of forces in the region and these weapons could fall into the hands of Hizbullah," Shalom said. (Elad Benari, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, May 14, 2013)

Obama urged to act on Syria

Legislators in the United States are pressing President Barack Obama to act against the Syrian regime for its suspected use of chemical weapons. [But] US President Barack Obama, [is] hesitant to acknowledge Syria's use of chemical weapons as a war crime. Mr Obama said that the intelligence must be corroborated, while reiterating that confirmation would be a "game-changer" for the US.

British Prime Minister David Cameron has accused the Syrian regime of a "war crime" as evidence emerged of two more gas attacks that have poisoned another 105 people. Asked about reports that President Bashar al-Assad's forces had used chemical weapons, Mr Cameron said: "What I see does look very much like a war crime is being committed in our world, at this time, by the Syrian government."

The latest incidents took place on Thursday in the southern town of Daraya, according to the Syrian Support Group (SSG), a Washington-based organisation representing the Free Syrian Army. The regime's forces fired two "chemical-filled" rockets which released a poisonous gas affecting 105 people. Demands in Congress have ranged from Republican senator John McCain's push to establish a no-fly zone and provide weapons to Syria's opposition, to Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein's call to take the matter to the United Nations. Debate over Syria was given new impetus by the administration's disclosure on Thursday that intelligence agencies had assessed with "varying degrees of confidence" that Mr Assad's regime had used chemical munitions on a small scale in two instances.

Mr Obama said on Friday: "There are a range of questions around how, when, where these weapons may have been used. We have to make these assessments deliberately, but I think all of us - not just in the United States, but around the world - recognise how we cannot stand by and permit the systematic use of weapons like chemical weapons on civilian populations." In the Syrian government's first response to the findings, Information Minister Omran al-Zoubi said: "the fabricated and false" allegations "do not have any credibility", reported the Sana news agency. The regime has said chemical weapons have been used by "terrorists", its blanket description for the opposition. Mr Obama has never said what action he would take if Syria crossed what he's called a "red line" against the use of toxic agents. Mr McCain, of Arizona, renewed what he called a two-year effort to persuade the administration "to provide a safe area for the opposition to operate, to establish a no-fly zone and provide weapons to people in the resistance whom we trust". Representative Tom Rooney of Florida, a Republican member of the House intelligence committee, disagreed and echoed the administration's concern that funneling arms into the volatile region may backfire. "The easy thing would be to help the rebels, but the reality of the situation is" that many of them are "the people we have been fighting for the last 10 years," he said, referring to groups of Islamic extremists associated with al-Qaeda. "We should be very careful how we proceed."

For Mr Obama, the challenge remains what to do if the administration comes to the conclusion that his "red line" has been crossed. "He doesn't want to get involved in another war in the Middle East," said Richard Murphy, a former US ambassador to Syria and adjunct scholar at the Middle East Institute. "The question is, when you set a red line, do you stand behind it?" (David Lerman, Roger Runningen, *The Sun-Herald*, April 28, 2013)

Putin warns against moves that could 'shake' Syria

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu landed in Sochi, Russia on Tuesday and met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday warned against any moves that would further destabilise the situation in Syria, speaking after talks with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"In this crucial period it is especially important to avoid any moves that can shake the situation," Putin was quoted as saying by news agencies, days after Israeli forces launched air strikes against regime targets in Syria.

Netanyahu had been expected to warn Putin against delivering advanced S-300 missiles to Syria which would severely complicate any future air attacks against the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Netanyahu in his public comments did not indicate whether he succeeded in convincing Putin to halt arms supplies to Syria or whether the two leaders reached any firm agreements. Speaking to reporters, Netanyahu stressed that his country's task was to "defend its citizens." "Together we are trying to find ways to strengthen stability and security, we have a

remarkable opportunity to directly speak with each other," the Israeli premier was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies. Russia has refused to halt arms supplies to the Damascus regime, saying it has to honour contracts it concluded before the war. (Uzi Baruch, *IsraelNationalNews.com*, May 14, 2013)

Syria President Bashar al-Assad's peace plan one-sided: envoy

PEACE envoy Lakhdar Brahimi says ahead of US-Russia talks on Syria that President Bashar al-Assad's new plan for his embattled country is "more sectarian, more one-sided" than previous initiatives. He spoke as the first major prisoner swap in the 21-month conflict took place, with rebels freeing 48 Iranians in exchange for more than 2000 regime detainees in a drawn-out deal with Damascus reportedly brokered by Turkey, Qatar and Iran. UN and Arab League envoy Brahimi was giving his first public reaction to a three-step plan announced by Assad on Sunday.

"What has been said this time is not really different and it is perhaps even more sectarian, more one-sided," Brahimi told the BBC. "What you need is reaching out and recognising that there is a problem, a very, very serious problems between Syrians, and that Syrians have got to talk to one another to solve it," he said.

Assad's plan for a "political solution" in Syria was swiftly rejected by the opposition and Western nations as being detached from reality. The plan offered a dialogue with the opposition to end the conflict - but only with elements he deemed acceptable, not rebel-affiliated groups he termed "killers" and "terrorists" led by foreigners.

Referring to the so-called Arab Spring that has swept the region since late 2010, Brahimi said: "Now people want to have a say in how they are governed. They want to take hold of their own future."

"In Syria in particular, what people are saying is that one family ruling for 40 years is a little bit too long."

The stinging comments came ahead of talks in Geneva on Friday between Brahimi and US and Russian officials.

"The trilateral meeting between (Russian Deputy Foreign Minister) Mikhail Bogdanov, (US Undersecretary of State) William Burns, and Lakhdar Brahimi has been planned for January 11 in Geneva," Bogdanov told the Interfax news agency. Wednesday's developments came with no respite from the fighting, which in nearly 22 months of conflict has claimed some 60,000 lives, according to UN figures. Four children from the same family were among as many as 10 civilians killed in a pre-dawn air strike near the central city of Homs, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. In the northwest, jihadist fighters seized parts of a large military airport after a weeks-long siege, the watchdog said, giving Wednesday's provisional death toll as at least 36.

In an unprecedented development, a prisoner swap involving 48 Iranian men abducted by rebels in Damascus in early August and 2130 prisoners of Syrian and other nationalities ended on Wednesday, according to several sources.

The Iranians, described by Tehran as "pilgrims" and by the rebels as captured Revolutionary Guards members supporting Syrian forces, looked visibly exhausted, with some weeping, an AFP correspondent reported. A rebel spokesman and Iranian officials said the prisoner swap, arranged through mediation by Turkey and Qatar, was the biggest to occur in Syria's conflict. Iran's foreign ministry praised the efforts "by our friend and brother Syria and the assistance of Qatar and Turkey in freeing the pilgrims." Turkish aid group the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) said it spearheaded the swap of the Iranians for 2139 prisoners of Assad's regime, mostly Syrians but also a few foreigners including Turks. Meanwhile, a core Syrian opposition group, the Syrian National Council, urged the umbrella opposition Syrian National Coalition, recognised by the West as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, to form an interim government. A Council document obtained by AFP proposed the temporary administration be set up to run "liberated territories", and to push for Assad's removal and the dissolution of all regime security forces except the police. It called on the Coalition to "dismiss the army's top commanders and dissolve both the Fourth Division and the Republican Guard." The feared Fourth Division is led by Assad's brother Maher, and charged with ensuring security in Damascus. (AFP/*The Australian*, Jan. 10, 2013)

Turkey bombings blamed on Assad regime

TWIN car bombs have killed at least 43 people and wounded 100 in a Turkish town near the Syrian border, in an attack Ankara blamed on pro-Damascus groups. The bombings were the deadliest in Turkey, a key supporter of the Syrian opposition, since the conflict started more than two years ago. Rescuers were hunting for possible survivors buried underneath the rubble of buildings destroyed by the blasts in Reyhanli, one of the main Turkish hubs for Syrian refugees and rebels. Over a dozen ambulances and several air ambulances rushed to the scene to tend to the victims, NTV television said, adding that the town hall had suffered major damage.

A number of cars were also completely wrecked in the attacks which caused a power cut in the area around Reyhanli, according to local media. Deputy Prime Minister Besir Atalay said the blasts had killed at least 43. Several of the 100 wounded were in critical condition. "The people and the organisation who carried out this attack have been identified," Interior Minister Muammer Guler told national TRT television.

"We have established that they are linked to groups supporting the Syrian regime and its intelligence services," he said. Turkey distanced itself from its erstwhile ally soon after Syrian President Bashar al-Assad started cracking down on pro-democracy protests in 2011. Ankara has since become a rear base for the Syrian rebellion and Damascus has already been blamed for a string of attacks on Turkish soil. Mr Atalay said that the perpetrators of Saturday's attacks did not appear to have crossed into Turkey from Syria but were already in the country. Mr Guler said the regional governor had been sent to Reyhanli "to put the necessary security measures in place."

The attack sowed panic in Reyhanli, a town of about 60,000 people, leading to tensions between youths and Syrian refugees and forcing police to fire into the air to disperse the crowd. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, on a visit to Berlin, said it was "not a coincidence" that these bombings occurred as international diplomatic efforts to solve the Syrian crisis were intensifying. "It is not a coincidence that this should happen in a period where there is an acceleration of efforts on Syria in the whole world," he told reporters.

"Nothing will go unanswered," added Mr Davutoglu, vowing the culprits would be brought to justice.

The United States and Russia, one of the few remaining supporters of Assad's regime, pledged this week to relaunch efforts to solve the conflict, which the United Nations estimates has killed 70,000 people since March 2011.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will soon visit Russia for talks with President Vladimir Putin, officials said earlier Saturday, amid a flurry of diplomatic activity. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who earlier this month branded Assad a "butcher", is due to meet US President Barack Obama in Washington on Thursday. The West swiftly

denounced the attacks. French President Francois Hollande condemned them “in the strongest possible terms” while UN leader Ban Ki-moon said the perpetrators must be “brought to justice.”

US Secretary of State John Kerry also condemned the “awful news” and said it struck “an especially personal note for all of us given how closely we work in partnership with Turkey, and how many times Turkey’s been a vital interlocutor at the centre of my work as secretary of state these last three months.” Meanwhile, the Syrian opposition National Coalition said the attacks were designed to drive a wedge between Turks and Syrians.

“The Coalition sees these heinous terrorist acts as an attempt to take revenge on the Turkish people and punish them for their honourable support of the Syrian people (...)” The bombings were “a desperate and failed attempt to sow discord”, the opposition said in a statement. Reyhanli lies in southern Turkey near the Cilvegözü crossing opposite Syria’s rebel-controlled Bab al-Hawa border post, the busiest crossing between the two countries.

The border area has witnessed a number of deadly attacks as the conflict in Syria spills over into Turkey, whose government has become one of its harshest critics. In February, a car bomb attack at Cilvegözü which Turkey blamed on Syrian intelligence agents killed 17 people and wounded 30. Earlier this month, one police officer was killed and six other people wounded when Syrians trying to cross into Turkey opened fire in a border buffer zone.

Saturday’s attack came as Turkey ramped up its rhetoric against Assad, with Erdogan accusing the regime in Damascus of deploying chemical weapons, crossing a “red line” set by Obama.

“It is clear the regime has used chemical weapons and missiles,” he told NBC News on Thursday, without elaborating but urging the United States to take more action against Syria. (AFP, May 12, 2013)

Israel Will Strike Iran 's Subterranean Nuclear Sites

An Israeli strike on Iran’s sites is inevitable. However, timing and opportunity do matter. A careful analysis of both. Israel is facing an existential threat far greater than anyone could have ever imagined and difficult to ignore. On the contrary, it would even be foolish to assume that Israelis and Jews [living overseas](#) are safer - when Iran becomes a nuclear capable state. An **overwhelming majority** of Israelis believe that the Iranian nuclear threat constitutes an existential threat to the State of Israel; and the price Israel would have to pay for living under the shadow of Iran’s nuclear warheads is higher than the price it would pay for attacking Iran’s nuclear capability. Israel’s cruel dilemma is an open ended question of bombing or not bombing Iran. A critical decision to risk indeterminate war with Iran will be a momentous challenge for Israel- and yet, it will have a durable impact towards the preservation of geopolitical-strategic balance of power in the restive Middle East.

In any military conflict, however, timing and opportunity do matter. Indeed, an inevitable Israeli airstrike against Iran’s subterranean nuclear facilities may be a very complex operation- but Israel’s high tech military advantage could level the playing field and determine once and for all, the fate of its enemies, who would reel in disbelief. Consequently, plausible deniability and nuclear ambiguity have served Israel’s decisive deterrence so far against Iran and its proxies: Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza.

It is interesting to note that Israel’s first layer of defense, the Iron Dome, has successfully intercepted short-range rockets from Gaza during **Operation Pillar of Defense**, but the **David Sling** and Arrow, specifically designed with Iran’s Shahab missiles in mind, has never been tested in real-life combat. In general, an Israeli Air Force (IAF) strike on Iran’s underground nuclear facilities from Natanz to Fordow, in particular, might require the most lethal combination of sophisticated precision-guided bunker-buster weapons (GBU-27 and **GBU-28**) that can only be carried on B-2 Spirit stealth bombers. In large measure, Israel already possesses these weapons, built either on their own or sold to it by the U.S.

But, it is unclear how Israel would deliver the GBUs maximum payload short of B-2s. Furthermore, Israel’s possession of **Jericho III** intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), that can reach New York and Tokyo, are capable of striking Iran’s above-ground targets. The high speed of the ICBM makes it practically invincible for interception and will free up IDF aircrafts to focus on hard targets. In absolute terms, Israel could use tactical nukes- but the IDF might opt to use the much vaunted precision guided GBU-31s which have the same warhead as Israel’s existing GBU-28s (the **BLU-122** warhead)- to augment the IAF’s existing capabilities.

Of course, it is not surprising, or beyond the realm of impossibilities, that Israel might deploy a simultaneous, knockout combination of cyber offensive weapons and **electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attacks**.

In the event Russia might have surreptitiously supplied Iran with the SA-12 or **S-300** air defense systems, the attrition rate of an Israeli air strike could be significant. But now, a respected Washington think tank (**CSIS**) has said that low-radioactive yield “tactical” nuclear warheads would be one way for the Israelis to destroy Iranian uranium enrichment plants in remote, dug-in fortifications. Given the difficulty its jets would face in reaching Iran for anything more than a one-off sortie - ballistic missiles or submarine-launched [cruise](#) missiles could serve for Israeli tactical nuclear strikes without interference from Iranian air defenses.

"Preemptive nuclear strikes are foreign to the national doctrine":

Israeli leaders do not comment on this capability other than to underscore its deterrent role. A veteran Israeli defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said preemptive nuclear strikes were foreign to the national doctrine: **"Such weapons exist so as not to be used."**

Neither the public nor the media ought to deal with the operational issues that are connected to a military action. Having said that, the mainstream media is actually rife with speculation about the United States -- which, like Israel, has not ruled out military force to deny Iran atomic arms, and could itself resort to tactical nuclear strikes.

"We are not bluffing," has become the familiar refrain from both countries specifically as a warning to Iran. Under no circumstances will Israel agree to a nuclear-armed Iran. Unfortunately, the U.S.-Iran **secret nuclear deal** to recognize Iran as a “threshold-power”, as long as it does not manufacture atomic weapons is inherently a flawed logic. As a result of a possible military dimension to Iran’s nuclear program, Iran has **forfeited** its right to unrestricted access to civil nuclear technology. Moreover, nuclear weapons have become a symbol of Iran’s national pride and therefore, there is no ironclad guarantee that Iran will not pursue nuclear weapons.

The possibility that there is still time for diplomatic sanctions to succeed is just a morbid dream and an illusion of the imprudent Obama administration. Let us make this categorically clear to Iran:

The U.S. and Israel share a united front against Iran, and the U.S. commitment to defending its longtime ally in the Middle East remains unbreakable. For the most part, the U.S. has a **60-year** commitment to Israeli security, and if Israel's population centers were hit, the U.S. could feel obligated to come to Israel's defense.

The importance of the recent most complex and carefully orchestrated **\$10 billion arms deal** to maintain Israel's military edge cannot be overemphasized - a clear signal that Iran could face a military strike unless it abandoned its suspect nuclear program. Although Iran's genocidal rhetoric is unmistakably clear, Israel senses **bluffing** in Iran's threats of retaliation. Come to think about it- a fanatical radical Islamist theocracy bent on taking over the world for Islam, and "wiping Israel off the map", by itself deserves to be **sent back to the Stone Age**.

Now the moment of truth has come to a close: Iran has enough enriched uranium to build five atomic bombs and probably is in possession of at least one primitive nuclear device—a "**dirty bomb**."

What's really interesting here is Washington's response to **U.S. intelligence** indicating that the "red line"- Syria's use of chemical weapons (sarin) and the transfer of its stockpiles to a terrorist group under the guidance of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Al-Quds - has been passed is very troublesome.

In light of these developments, Iran's direct involvement in all the conflicts in Syria and the botched terrorist attacks in different parts in the world are a ruse designed to divert attention from its illicit nuclear program.

Finally, there is no question that under the Obama White House's incompetent foreign policy, Iran has become the **greatest purveyor of global terrorism** and now is a de facto nuclear state, which via proxies has violated every convention of warfare- is a "**casus belli**" for Israeli military action.

The bottom line here is quite simple: in a few years, Israel's existence would be worthless, if it didn't make a historic decision to confront Iran's atomic ambitions. The truth, however cruel, is also revealing: Israel must always adopt the war footing required to prevail over the unimaginable perils and catastrophic consequences of a nuclear Iran. (Joe Tuzara, IsraelNationalNews.com, April 26, 2013)

Netanyahu: Conflict is Over Israel's Existence, Not Land

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Authority is not over land, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said Wednesday, speaking in a meeting with senior officials in the Foreign Ministry. The conflict, he said, is over Israel's very existence. In proof, he pointed to the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, which included the forced removal of thousands of Jewish residents of the area. Israel got rocket attacks in exchange, he said.

The Palestinian Authority does not wish to recognize Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people, he continued. However, he said, Israel remains willing to restart negotiations with no preconditions.

Netanyahu is the acting Foreign Minister until a verdict is reached in the case of Avigdor Lieberman, Netanyahu's choice for Foreign Minister, who faces corruption charges. PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas has stated that the PA **will not recognize Israel** as the Jewish state. Abbas argues that terming Israel the Jewish state would effectively mean giving up the Arab demand that millions of descendants of Arabs who fled pre-state Israel be given the "right of return" to modern Israel. (IsraelNationalNews.com, May 1, 2013)

Islamic rewrite of Gallipoli legend

In the shifting sands of military history, few battles have been mythologised as absolutely as the Gallipoli campaign. Its brutal, often hand-to-hand clashes are almost unrecognisable in today's remote-controlled modern warfare, and its losses were significant: 8709 Australians died in the failed push to control the strategic Turkish seaways, along with 2707 New Zealanders, about 21,000 British, about 9800 French and 1358 Indians. Up to 86,000 Turkish soldiers also died in the campaign, and details of life on the frontline continue to be teased from a handful of their precious diaries. In the lead-up to the 2015 centenary of the seven-month long campaign, Turkish and Australian academics are also sifting through thousands of pages of Turkish military documents.

Like the diaries, the documents are written in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic script - Turkey adopted Roman script in 1928 - so must be painstakingly translated to supplement the historical and archaeological work that it is hoped will put together the few missing pieces of the Gallipoli story.

Associate Professor Muhammet Erat from the Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University near Gallipoli says the military records and documents lack the human side of the war: "what they felt, how they suffered, what they ate, what they didn't eat, these personal details are lacking in the historical documents," he says. "We want to uncover those truths and share them with people." But amid this renewed search for answers, a parallel retelling of the Turkish myths of Gallipoli is occurring across this moderate Islamic country.

At its heart is a reassessment of the role of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the Turkish commander at Gallipoli, founder of the modern, secular Turkish republic and its first president, says the director of the Gallipoli Centenary Research Project at Macquarie University, Harvey Broadbent. "There definitely seems to be a move in certain political circles to reduce the role of Ataturk and increase the motivation of Turks at Gallipoli ... to be fired by their belief in Islam, to say they looked on it as a kind of holy war," Broadbent says. "This ... aligns itself with the rolling back of Ataturk's secular ideas to reduce the restrictions that he placed on religion in the state." Since the moderate Islamic Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002 many secular Turks fear the Ataturk myth is being quietly dismantled.

And with it his role in the Gallipoli campaign is being retold, Broadbent says.

"Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and ... his superior officer both had a strong, purely military approach to the war, rather than any extremist or pious religious attitude to motivating the troops," he says. "Ataturk always called on his troops to fight for the motherland rather than fighting for Allah." But recent growth in Turkish battlefield tourism has occurred hand-in-hand with the significant Turkish military memorials developing into "more sacred Islamic spaces", he says. At the heart of the resentment many Islamists feel towards Ataturk is his decision in 1924, soon after he came to power, to abolish the caliphate and lay the foundations for a more secular society.

The issue of secularism versus religion is a deeply sensitive one in Turkey, says Muhammet Erat.

An academic who has spent his career studying the battles on the Gallipoli peninsula, Erat acknowledges "there may be people who try to diminish Ataturk's success ... but these opinions cannot ever change what he has achieved". "Without Ataturk the narrative of 1915 would be incomplete, but by only telling it from the perspective of Ataturk would also be incomplete." He notes that the majority of Turkey's population during World War I was Muslim and that the Sultan

Mehmet V, also the Caliph, declared a jihad or holy war in 1914, calling on all Muslims to help the Ottoman Empire in its battle against the Allied Forces. Few heeded the Caliph's call.

His colleague Assistant Professor Azer Banu Kemaloglu, who is also working on the Gallipoli centenary research project, says in the past five years there has been a noticeable campaign to "attempt to debunk Ataturk's myth", prompting significant debate across Turkey. "They say he was an insignificant actor in the Gallipoli campaign," she says. "Because Ataturk represents the last remnants of the secular nationhood and they want to move towards an Islamic government, they have to kill this idea, this myth of Ataturk."

Yet it is a difficult myth to kill. Described by historians as having a "superb grasp of strategy" Ataturk and his leadership was seen as decisive in defeating the Allies' plans, ultimately forcing the withdrawal of Allied troops, including Australians, in December 1915. As well as examining the diaries provided by veterans' family members, Erat's team will be travelling through the countryside around Canakkale, where much of the Turkish military contingent was drawn, collecting oral histories from families.

It is the stories from the mouths of soldiers that keep the experience of Gallipoli alive, he says.

"When they were in the trenches in 1915 and they wanted to see if the other side was sleeping, they would put a cap on their rifle and raise it up - if the Australians were awake they would shoot at it, if they were asleep they would not," Erat says. "These things do not occur in modern warfare; the humour, the humanity, that is missing. In modern warfare there is not even the need for trenches."

The Gallipoli project led by Harvey Broadbent at Macquarie University is similarly ambitious, combing the Turkish military archives in Ankara and the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul to comprehensively piece together the Turkish side of the campaign. "We know substantially the Australian British and French story - there are over 130 publications in English relating to the Gallipoli campaign throughout the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century," Broadbent says. "What is not well covered in English is the Turkish side of the story. It is going to provide ... sections of the story of Gallipoli that have been missing, including answers to questions such as why the August offensive failed and how near it came to success."

In 1934, Ataturk wrote a moving tribute to Anzacs who died at Gallipoli, reaching out to his former enemies in a way Kemaloglu says was much better received in Australia than in Turkey.

"Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives ... You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country," Ataturk wrote. "Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side now here in this country of ours ... you, the mothers, who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land. They have become our sons as well." And it is here, on this remote peninsula on Turkey's Aegean coastline, that so many young Australians lie, the neatly arranged rows of gravestones punctuated with bright yellow, pink and purple flowers a poignant reminder of that brutal campaign. (Ruth Pollard, *SMH*, April 25, 2013)

Pilots lose as China flies closer to sun

The People's Liberation Army Air Force plane drifted past a city and seemed to float, like a leaf, before exploding on a mudflat where the Shandong Peninsular juts out into the Yellow Sea.

"It was floating, floating, floating, then bang! It suddenly hit the ground," says a witness on video footage of the smoking wreckage taken on March 31 that was anonymously uploaded on to the Chinese version of YouTube.

The plume of black smoke still billowing from the wreckage 20 minutes after the crash suggests the tanks were full and the accident occurred not long after take-off, probably from Jinan. Perhaps there had been a fuel blockage on a wing tank, leading to a weight imbalance that contributed to the Soviet-made Su-27 20 entering a "flat spin" before descending like a kite to earth, according to retired and serving air force officers. The presence of what appear to be ejector seats metres from the wreck suggests the two airmen died because they ejected too late.

The names of Yu Liang, 33, and Wu Yongming, 36, will be added to the 1747 inscribed on the Heroes and Martyrs Wall at Beijing's Chinese Aviation Museum. For military watchers, the more they see inside one of the world's most secretive air forces, it seems, the less they are impressed. Pilots are neither trusted nor properly trained. Drills are regimented, centrally controlled and divorced from realistic combat conditions.

The PLA has nearly as many aircraft as the US but only a fraction of the peace-time accident rate, suggesting pilots are not spending sufficient time in the air or training under pressure.

While Chinese military enthusiasts saw the Shandong crash as an embarrassing setback, professionals saw it as a sign the PLA Air Force might be starting to take the risks required to develop human "software" that can match its expensive hardware to compete with the force's American, Taiwanese or Japanese counterparts. "They've got to take risks," says Robert Rubel, a graduate of the US Navy's Top Gun Academy and now dean of the centre for naval warfare studies at the US Naval War College. "I've lost control of every airplane I've ever tried to fly."

In the Chinese version of *Top Gun*, the equivalent of "Maverick" is a hot shot, risk-taking wing commander who arrives to drag the PLA Air Force into the 21st century. The characters in the 2010 film *Skyfighters* wear sunglasses and chase female instructors on motorbikes along airstrips. The main difference from the US original is that the red team are the good guys, shooting at the blue. The moral of the film is that in the PLA's new "scientific" environment, pilots will be rewarded for showing initiative, flying under combat-like pressure and taking risks, even if they scratch the paintwork. The hero, Commander Yue, has the Tom Cruise character's appetite for high-octane adventure but is otherwise free of his preternatural ego. His "scientific outlook" is benchmarked against international best practice and juxtaposed against his vanquished deputy, who prefers to quote aphorisms about controlling remote armies from a tent like Mao did before 1949 at the Red Army base camp of Xibaipo.

Skyfighters aims to challenge deep conventions in China's risk-averse system, where decisions are avoided or made high up in the hierarchy. But this film about the PLA breaking from dysfunctional, committee-driven micro-management is littered with signs that suggest it may not be possible. The opening scene, in which a pilot escapes being court-martialled after his Su-27 hits a bird, seems to underscore why ambitious Chinese pilots may be better off sticking to the ground. Commander Yue cannot wield full authority because he has to defer to a political commissar, who has no professional knowledge, and he is constantly second-guessed by a deputy playing on his bureaucratic home turf. When Commander Yue's J-10 spins out of control attempting Maverick's "cobra" move - "I'll hit the brakes and he'll fly right by" - ancient habits of

centralised, hierarchical control seem inescapable. "Check the oil", "watch your altitude", instructs his deputy commander from the control tower, as if that would help a pilot who would be clenching his entire body to push blood to his brain and avoid passing out.

US and Australian commanders are required to delegate responsibility as far down the chain as possible and pilots are trained to make their own decisions, veterans say. They work through endless emergency procedure simulators to internalise key parameters and make instant decisions. Nothing is hammered into a pilot's head more deeply than the decision to eject at a set altitude when out of control. But in the film, Commander Yue obeys myriad petty orders and ignores the only one that counts. "I believe the plane has a soul," he tells the military tribunal, explaining why he ignored an order to eject. He receives a standing ovation. Many of the PLA's organisational weaknesses depicted in *Skyfighters* resonate with what professionals observe.

The PLA's most high-profile challenge is to operate newly revamped Ukrainian aircraft carrier the Liaoning - with indigenously produced planes fitted with reverse-engineered Soviet technology - and project military power offshore. Last week Liaoning captain Zhang Zheng and Rear Admiral Song Xue briefed defence attaches in Beijing and confirmed an ambition to build bigger carriers. They also admitted to having only 12 trained pilots for the J-15 fighters they plan to deploy, according to sources who were present, suggesting it may be decades before Chinese carriers operate effectively at sea. "They've got to learn to operate on cloudy no-moon nights, where there is no horizon, and to land on a deck that's pitching 10, 12 feet," says Professor Rubel. Even more crucial, he says, is developing the systems and culture to learn from mistakes.

The US Navy lost 13,000 aircraft and 9000 air crew in four decades after World War II, mostly due to accidents not enemy fire, as its pilots adjusted to the lethal combination of jet engines and aircraft carriers. The challenge of operating battle groups and jet-powered air wings at sea is multiplied in a Chinese system where politics trumps professionalism and there is no transparency or independent institutions to monitor and regulate the game. Chinese officers admit they have a long way to go but say the risk tolerance is increasing under new commander-in-chief Xi Jinping. "Accidents are the price that must be paid to improve combat capability," said Air Force Senior Colonel Dai Xu. "This is the price for scientific progress." (John Garnaut, *The Sun-Herald*, April 28, 2013)

Something is not adding up... Where's the money?

If you have been reading *The Economist*, *Financial Times* and other financial papers, you'll notice an odd conundrum that to me, as a political economist, does not add up.

On the one hand, we are told in Western media that capital is increasingly held in the private sector's coffers. Private companies and firms are sitting on capital and not spending it. Worried that a rainy day is before them, so we are told, those in the private sector have not expanded their operations. For some policy makers who lament this state of affairs, like our Canadian Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, it is a lost opportunity to see the strong economic growth rates that will help the West get out of its slump.

The numbers are pretty staggering too. U.S. firms have \$1.8 trillion in their coffers and European Union firms have \$1.5 trillion. In the emerging market economies, there is plenty of capital but they are obsessed with calibrating the pace of economic growth with political change. Western policy makers, or simply governments, are told that they need to keep creating the supportive environment to make private businesses confident in their long term prospects. But note the kicker here is that Western governments are not supposed to regulate, over-manage or dictate. Yes, governments need to remind businesses that that they are pretty, otherwise they won't go out to the prom, so to speak. If you find this frustrating, you are not alone and let's create a club.

But, what makes this more complex to me is that on the other side of the world, in the nebulous East or emerging market economies, it is governments that have all the capital in their coffers and hoarding their own capital for the rainy day when, they believe, Western governments might just mess things up again à la 2007-2008. In most emerging market economies, it is the state or government that is expected to be the engine of growth, but they are cautious savers and afraid of global volatility. Plus, they tend to be new at democracy or still on the path of political liberalization and they fear the demands of their own publics — who want all the goods and services that a modern, urban society should offer them — but are also mindful of inflation and the ills of market distortions.

And what about the rest, those not in the West and in emerging market economies? They don't have capital in their coffers, capital on the private market is generally expensive because of so much global uncertainty. So what is a country to do? The buzz phrase: public-private partnerships. Yes, donors, international financial institutions, and governments alike now talk about the need for private and government capital to create profit-making projects and services for its people. Truth is, this doesn't work in plenty of industries and sectors where the private sector can't make the profit off the back of ordinary people: think sewage systems and roads in the developing world.

So something doesn't add up to me. Our modern capitalist system has Western governments unable to tell its teenager what to do — fluid capital can be finicky. In the emerging market economies, there is plenty of capital but they are obsessed with calibrating the pace of economic growth with political change. And the rest? Well they just wish everyone would get along and invest in helping them to meet the development challenges of the masses. Where's all the money? (Bessma Momani, *CIGOnline.org*, April 9, 2013)

Austerity, French-style: President Francois Hollande selling his wine for cash

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Things must be getting tough. In the midst of the economic crisis, French President Francois Hollande is to sell off 1,200 bottles of wine from the cellars of his Elysee Palace.

The auction on May 30 and 31 is expected to raise \$330,000. Part of the returns will go to restocking the cellar with more modest wines; the rest will go toward reducing France's budget deficit, currently running at \$35 billion.

Elysee's wine cellar is one of the most secretive and heavily guarded in the world, with some of its choicest bottles reserved for dinners with dignitaries from around the world. Bordeaux and Burgundy wines will feature heavily in the auction. Among the presidential vintages going under the hammer is a bottle of Petrus 1990 that's expected to go for around \$2,900. At the cheaper end are some bottles selling for less than \$20 apiece.

"These are wines that have featured on the presidential table for dinners and receptions," a representative of the auction house was quoted telling the business magazine *Challenges*. "Some would have been present at the events linked to

the history of the Republic." The profits put back into government coffers are meant to serve as a small symbol that France's leaders are willing to taste austerity.

But they won't drink too deeply from that cup, since some of the proceeds will go toward purchasing new wine, albeit younger and cheaper. The president will be more than able to drown his sorrows at the loss of any favorite tipples — the 1,200 bottles on sale represent just 10 percent of the palace's total reserve.

Hollande is not the first French leader to sell off his stock recently. In 2006, Mayor of Paris Bertrand Delanoë put 5,000 bottles from the city hall reserves on the block, including a 1986 Romanée-Conti from Burgundy that was snapped up for \$6,600. (Paul Ames and Alexander Besant, *Global Post*, May 1, 2013)

Health

The body fat that's good for you

CRACK this riddle... What am I? The more of me you have, the less you weigh. The older you get, the quicker I disappear. Men don't have as much of me as women do. Until recently, scientists didn't think adults had any of me at all and believed I could only be found in rodents and newborn babies. The answer is: brown fat, a beneficial part of our bodies that researchers are now unlocking some of the mysteries of. While most body fat - white fat - can be harmful, researchers believe brown fat may hold a key to fighting obesity in the future.

What is brown fat?

Dr Paul Lee, an endocrinologist at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Sydney, who is now continuing his research at the National Institutes of Health in Washington DC, explains: "Think of white fat as an energy storehouse and brown fat as a generator. Brown fat burns fat, rather than storing it. As it burns fat, it turns this energy into heat to keep us warm."

Brown fat is present in newborn babies to help them maintain body heat, but scientists believed that it disappeared after infancy. However, new imaging technology has revealed that people actually retain varying levels of brown fat in adulthood - usually around the neck, shoulders, spine and adrenal glands.

More fat the better

Lee's research has found that people with higher reserves of brown fat are usually slimmer, have a lower body mass index and a healthier blood glucose level. "It looks as if people who are overweight have less brown fat," he says.

"Now we're looking into whether having less brown fat means burning less fat in general and thus putting on weight. Or is it perhaps because a person is overweight and has the layer of fat that provides sufficient insulation that their brown fat atrophies because there's no longer the need for it?" While 50 grams of white fat stores around 300 kilocalories of energy - potentially leading to weight gain - the same amount of brown fat burns 300 kilocalories a day, which is why it has a lot more health benefits.

Activating brown fat

Scientists at Boston's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute have found that exercise may convert some white fat into brown by increasing the level of the hormone irisin. It appears to "activate" the genes that transform one type of fat into another. These researchers are now developing an irisin-based drug to aid weight loss and also improve blood glucose levels, reducing the risk of diabetes. Professor Peter Clifton, head of nutrition at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute in Melbourne, agrees that working out increases brown fat efficiency.

"If you exercise, you can activate brown fat, although we don't yet know how much training you have to do. That said, regular exercise and increasing muscle helps the effectiveness of brown fat," he says.

Kickstart in the cold

Staying cool also seems to stimulate brown fat. In a study at the University of Sherbrooke in Quebec, a group of men were placed in a cool room - chilled but not cold enough to make them shiver - and their metabolic rates increased by 80 per cent as their brown fat kicked into action. "Studies have shown that even exposure to mild cold - 18°C or 19°C - will activate brown fat," Lee adds. "One hypothesis is that obesity is reaching epidemic proportions because we're eating more and are less active, but we are also no longer exposed to the cold as much. Everywhere is so thermally regulated that we're not allowing brown fat to grow as a response to feeling chilly."

The fat of the future

As we learn more about the nature of brown fat, its potential medical benefits become increasingly apparent, too. Lee and his team at the Garvan Institute have shown that brown fat can be cultured from adult stem cells. This raises the possibility that it could eventually be grown outside the body and then transplanted into humans. Alternatively, the production of brown fat may eventually be stimulated with drugs.

"We know almost all humans have some brown fat. Some have more, some have less, but it's there," Dr Lee says. "If we can get the conditions right, we can potentially stimulate the growth of it in humans. Or we could harvest the human brown fat cells, grow them in a laboratory, then put them back into the body to increase the amount."

Knowing brown fat exists may help us discover if there are additional measures we can use to help people enjoy a more healthy weight." (Sarah Marinos, *The Telegraph*, May 11, 2013)

Pollution link to birth defects

As the Australian Senate inquiry into air quality proceeds in Canberra, research from the US has established a link between exposure to traffic pollution and increased risk of birth defects. The study, published online in *The American Journal of Epidemiology*, found that mothers living in areas with the highest levels of traffic pollution were almost twice as likely to give birth to a child with a neural tube defect (related to the brain and spinal cord) as are mothers living in areas with the lowest concentrations. The study's authors say further research is needed. (Lissa Christopher, April 19, 2013)

Charity calls to ban cancer-causing chemicals used by women

"URGENT" action is needed to reduce women's exposure to cancer-causing chemicals, a charity says.

Breast Cancer UK says there is "compelling" evidence that Bisphenol A (BPA) could be contributing to the rapid increase in the number of women being diagnosed with the disease. Every year in England there are nearly 42,000 new cases of breast cancer and incidence rates have increased by 90 per cent since 1971, the charity said.

In a new report, it said that low dose exposure to the chemical, which mimics human hormones and is routinely used in a variety of consumer products including tin cans, plastic food packaging, water bottles and lunch boxes, has been linked to breast cancer and other diseases. In Australia and elsewhere, BPA is commonly used in the lining of some food and beverage packaging. Small amounts of the chemical can migrate into food and beverages from containers and packaging. Food Standards Australia and New Zealand have acknowledged that some studies have raised potential concerns that BPA may cause multiple health problems but that "the overwhelming weight of scientific opinion is that there is no health or safety issue at the levels people are exposed to". Breast Cancer UK is calling for the hormone-disrupting chemical to be banned from all food and drinks packaging.

"The European Food Safety Authority... and the UK's Food Standards Agency claim that BPA is safe, based on their assertion that our exposure to BPA is allegedly low and that humans rapidly eliminate it from the body," the Breast Cancer UK report said. "In reality, it remains unclear exactly how much BPA we as humans are exposed to on a daily basis. Tests reveal that our daily exposure could be as much as eight times more than the so-called 'safe' limit.

"In addition to evidence to suggest that BPA could be a causative factor in breast cancer, studies show that it may also be implicated in other health problems such as infertility, obesity, prostate cancer, brain tumours, diabetes, heart disease and neurological and behavioural disorders. "Urgent action is needed to reduce human exposure to BPA."

Lynn Ladbrook, Breast Cancer UK campaigns manager said the government "can no longer sweep this sort of overwhelming evidence under the carpet." "It must acknowledge that our routine exposure to chemicals, like BPA, is a key part of the cancer prevention puzzle, one that is currently missing from its cancer and public health strategies. "We must redress this gap if we are to begin to help protect the health of future generations." (AAP, May 14, 2013)

Warning: mates may bring you down

Whingeing workmates and fed-up friends might be making you sick, reveal researchers who say depression could be a contagious illness transmitted through social networks.

A literature review by Australian psychiatrists has found mental health can be affected not only by the negative mood of someone's immediate friends and family, but by friends of friends he or she had never met. The paper, in this month's *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, suggests repeated exposure to depressed people might have an "emotional contagion" effect similar to how diseases are spread. In examining several research papers, including an analysis of a large-scale American study of health and mood changes in social networks over 32 years they found depression and loneliness could be contagious. Researchers say the findings could change how depression is treated, with doctors perhaps prescribing patients "pleasant activity" with friends who make them feel good.

Doctors might also be able to trace friends and family members of depressed patients to identify those at risk and offer mental health support to improve morale.

"Understanding who your friends are, how positive an influence they are in your life, what are the factors that need to be better managed, and how to navigate your friendship group would all be part of the therapy," said lead author Tarun Bastiampillai of the University of Adelaide. "If you're having a stressful time at work with one of your colleagues, the issue for the psychiatrist or the psychologist is how to help you manage that relationship," Dr Bastiampillai said. "You might discuss that work is really bad, I'm stressed, I don't like my work or my colleagues, and if you keep on talking about that repeatedly it can contribute to negative thinking about work and can translate potentially ... to a more pervasive depressive state." However, clinical psychiatrist Michael Baigent, a beyondblue board member, said it was highly unlikely someone could be "talked into" depression, and cautioned against over-emphasising the social contagion effect. "It's a normal human experience to be affected by the moods of other people from time to time but there's a difference between clinical depression and a transitory short-term state of thinking," Professor Baigent said. "I don't think I've ever seen someone develop depression by being around someone who is depressed, otherwise you would have doctors and others who treat people every day at high risk." He said being around depressed people was not always a negative and that people in mental health support groups could benefit.

Dr Bastiampillai said, conversely, a positive workplace, home life or friendship group could also have a contagion effect, leading to clusters of happiness within social networks. He conceded that one possible explanation was the "birds of a feather stick together" theory, in which people with similar personalities gravitated towards each other, and that further research was needed to explore the phenomenon. (Jill Stark, *The Sunday Age*, April 21, 2013)

A dose of the friendship blues

Greg Savoie has had depression for almost two decades. Who you know and how much time you spend with them is an important part of managing the condition, he says. "If you're with people who unfortunately happen to have it too, then it's likely to bring you down and bring them down. I was more one to isolate myself for a long time and that would worsen it." He is not convinced the people around you could cause depression but said he noticed the way he interacted with others affected his levels of depression. "I had ... more friends who might have been depressed or had a negative outlook on life. But I think it was sort of a compatibility, you know, 'you see things the same way I do', which makes me feel a bit better and that I'm OK." His behaviour changed when he spent time with positive friends, but "there's always that thought on some level that you're not like them and you wish you could improve and be more like that". "Each time I would spend time with [positive people] then my behaviour would improve, but it wouldn't necessarily stay," he said. (Sarah-Jane Collins, *The Sun-Herald*, April 21, 2013)

Best for breasts

Bras do nothing to prevent breasts sagging, according to a French study of 330 women. In fact, breasts normally left to run free tended to be firmer than those bound in a bra, the researchers, from Besancon University, found. Lead researcher Professor Jean-Denis Rouillon, a sports scientist who has been studying bosoms and bras for the best part of 16 years, reckons breasts become "dependent" on the support provided by a bra and so the nearby musculature deteriorates. "Medically, physiologically and anatomically, breasts gain no benefit from being denied gravity," Rouillon says. *Telegraph*, London

Gyms in a spin

Australians spent \$14.5 billion on takeaway food last year according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, up 3.7 per cent from 2011. Obesity is an epidemic affecting one out of every four people in the country. Along with the proliferation of junk food outlets on major intersections and in every shopping centre food court have sprung up businesses that deal with their consequences, such as medical offices and dentists. Increasingly they are being joined by businesses that strive to prevent people having to go to the doctor in the first place, such as fitness centres, active apparel stores and healthy food restaurants. Collectively, these businesses – the preventive and the curative – are set to change the face of strips and smaller shopping centres forever. It's in the fitness centre industry particularly where some important new trends are emerging. If what is happening in America is anything to go by, Australia may be on the cusp of a mini-revolution in the fitness industry, featuring new ways of exercising and new kinds of health clubs. One of the biggest trends now sweeping the US fitness industry is 'spinning.' This is not an idea that came from Shane Warne or Spiderman, but rather a new, high-tech enhancement on stationary biking. In a spinning class, riders work out side by side for 45 minutes to an hour on sophisticated bikes in an ambience more usually associated with a night club. Lights are low, the music is amped up, and instead of a performer on a stage there is an instructor on a lead bike barking out motivational instructions.

One of the leading chains in the spinning class craze is Flywheel, which has studios in 10 US states and Dubai. At the front of the class is a large screen called a 'torqboard', a kind of scoreboard that displays how each biker is going relative to the others. (You can use a pseudonym of course if you're the shy type.) Flywheel is also a retailer. It sells a range of post-workout apparel brands in its studios and is in the throes of launching e-commerce capabilities.

One of Flywheel's competitors is Soulcycle, whose 45-minute class includes weight training while the customer pedals so the whole body gets a workout. The 'weights' are in the form of resistance bands attached to a sliding track above the bike. Soulcycle claims the workout will "tone obliques, shoulders, triceps, back and chest while maintaining fat-burn cardio levels." Ouch. Meanwhile, Sync Studio, an expanding North Carolina spinning operator, creatively manages to combine high-tempo spinning classes with yoga sessions. And for those who may find plain vanilla spinning classes too conventional, there now also exists the option of 'aquaspinning' – yes, that's right, where you pedal like crazy underwater. Spinning is only one dimension of the new fitness craze.

The first generation of fitness clubs used to be fairly homogeneous. They either had good equipment or older equipment. They were bigger or they were smaller. Now, just as there are a number of different market positions for a fashion or food retailer, so it is with fitness centres. For example, Equinox in Los Angeles occupies approximately 10,000 square metres and costs a hefty \$210 per month to be a member. This entitles the member to an olympic-sized pool, state-of-the-art equipment, a lounge, restaurant, sundeck with cabanas and the opportunity to work out with celebrity trainers. Not to mention valet parking, carwashing and spa services.

Australia is fertile territory for this new generation of fitness centres. Despite its good climate and relatively low ambient pollution levels there are many people who prefer the trappings of a good indoor workout with high-tech self-monitoring equipment. Along with vegan restaurants, massage studios, spa salons and health clinics, these temples of the body will enrich the country's main streets and shopping centres. And hopefully get the obesity rate down at the same time. (Michael Baker, *SMH*, April 24, 2013)

Study Ties Autism to Creases in Placenta

After most pregnancies, the placenta is thrown out, having done its job of nourishing and supporting the developing baby. Dr. Harvey J. Kliman, a research scientist at the Yale School of Medicine, said he became fascinated with placentas and noticed that inclusions often occurred with births involving problematic outcomes, usually genetic disorders. But a new study raises the possibility that analyzing the placenta after birth may provide clues to a child's risk for developing autism. The study, which analyzed placentas from 217 births, found that in families at high genetic risk for having an autistic child, placentas were significantly more likely to have abnormal folds and creases.

"It's quite stark," said Dr. Cheryl K. Walker, an obstetrician-gynecologist at the Mind Institute at the University of California, Davis, and a co-author of the study, published in the journal *Biological Psychiatry*. "Placentas from babies at risk for autism, clearly there's something quite different about them." Researchers will not know until at least next year how many of the children, who are between 2 and 5, whose placentas were studied will be found to have autism. Experts said, however, that if researchers find that children with autism had more placental folds, called trophoblast inclusions, visible after birth, the condition could become an early indicator or biomarker for babies at high risk for the disorder. "It would be really exciting to have a real biomarker and especially one that you can get at birth," said Dr. Tara Wenger, a researcher at the Center for Autism Research at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, who was not involved in the study. The research potentially marks a new frontier, not only for autism, but also for the significance of the placenta, long considered an after-birth afterthought. Now, only 10 percent to 15 percent of placentas are analyzed, usually after pregnancy complications or a newborn's death.

Dr. Harvey J. Kliman, a research scientist at the Yale School of Medicine and lead author of the study, said the placenta had typically been given such little respect in the medical community that wanting to study it was considered equivalent to someone in the Navy wanting to scrub ships' toilets with a toothbrush. But he became fascinated with placentas and noticed that inclusions often occurred with births involving problematic outcomes, usually genetic disorders. He also noticed that "the more trophoblast inclusions you have, the more severe the abnormality." In 2006, Dr. Kliman and colleagues published research involving 13 children with autism, finding that their placentas were three times as likely to have inclusions. The new study began when Dr. Kliman, looking for more placentas, contacted the Mind Institute, which is conducting an extensive study, called Marbles, examining potential causes of autism. "This person came out of the woodwork and said, 'I want to study trophoblastic inclusions,'" Dr. Walker recalled. "Now I'm fairly intelligent and have been an obstetrician for years and I had never heard of them."

Dr. Walker said she concluded that while "this sounds like a very smart person with a very intriguing hypothesis, I don't know him and I don't know how much I trust him." So she sent him Milky Way bar-size sections of 217 placentas and let him think they all came from babies considered at high risk for autism because an older sibling had the disorder. Only after Dr. Kliman had counted each placenta's inclusions did she tell him that only 117 placentas came from at-risk babies; the other 100 came from babies with low autism risk. She reasoned that if Dr. Kliman found that "they all show a lot of inclusions, then maybe he's a bit overzealous" in trying to link inclusions to autism. But the results, she said, were

“astonishing.” More than two-thirds of the low-risk placentas had no inclusions, and none had more than two. But 77 high-risk placentas had inclusions, 48 of them had two or more, including 16 with between 5 and 15 inclusions. Dr. Walker said that typically between 2 percent and 7 percent of at-risk babies develop autism, and 20 percent to 25 percent have either autism or another developmental delay. She said she is seeing some autism and non-autism diagnoses among the 117 at-risk children in the study, but does not yet know how those cases match with placental inclusions. Dr. Jonathan L. Hecht, associate professor of pathology at Harvard Medical School, said the study was intriguing and “probably true if it finds an association between these trophoblast inclusions and autism.” But he said that inclusions were the placenta’s way of responding to many kinds of stress, so they might turn out not to be specific enough to predict autism. Dr. Kliman calls inclusions a “check-engine light, a marker of: something’s wrong, but I don’t know what it is.” That’s how Chris Mann Sullivan sees it, too. Dr. Sullivan, a behavioral analyst in Morrisville, N.C., was not in the study, but sent her placenta to Dr. Kliman after her daughter Dania, now 3, was born. He found five inclusions. Dr. Sullivan began intensive one-on-one therapy with Dania, who has not been given a diagnosis of autism, but has some relatively mild difficulties. “What would have happened if I did absolutely nothing, I’m not sure,” Dr. Sullivan said. “I think it’s a great way for parents to say, ‘O.K., we have some risk factors; we’re not going to ignore it.’” (Pam Belluck, *New York Times*, April 25, 2013)

How Exercise Can Jog Memory

It’s well established that exercise substantially changes the human brain, affecting both thinking and emotions. But a sophisticated, multifaceted new study suggests that the effects may be more nuanced than many scientists previously believed. Whether you gain all of the potential cognitive and mood benefits from exercise may depend on when and how often you work out, as well as on the genetic makeup of your brain. For the experiment, published last month in *Neuroscience*, researchers in the department of psychology and neuroscience at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H., recruited 54 adults, ages 18 to 36, from the college and the surrounding community. The volunteers were healthy but generally sedentary; none exercised regularly. During their first visit to the lab, they completed a series of questionnaires about their health and mood, including how anxious they were both at that moment and in general. They also gave blood for genetic testing. Earlier studies had shown that exercise can increase levels of a protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor, or BDNF, which is thought to play a role in the positive effects of exercise on thinking. But some people produce less BDNF after exercise than others because they have a variation in the gene that controls BDNF production, though it’s unknown whether they derive less cognitive benefit from exercise as a result. So the scientists wanted to determine each volunteer’s BDNF gene status. Then the group submitted to a memory test, consisting of pictures of objects flashed across a computer screen. Soon after, another set of pictures appeared, and the volunteers were asked to note, with keystrokes, whether they’d seen each particular image before.

This task involves a different part of the brain from the one most often focused on in studies of exercise and memory, says David Bucci, an associate professor of psychology and brain science at Dartmouth, who oversaw the study. Other experiments typically examine the effect of exercise on the hippocampus, the brain’s primary memory center, he says, but the object-recognition task involves activity in the perirhinal cortex, a portion of the brain essential to remembering particular things or objects and whether they happen to be new in your experience. Without a healthy perirhinal cortex, you might recall where you’ve put your car keys (a hippocampal memory task), but not what car keys are. Finally, after completing the tests, the volunteers were randomly assigned to exercise or not during the next four weeks. Half began a supervised program of walking or jogging four times a week for at least 30 minutes. The other half remained sedentary. After a month, the volunteers returned to the lab for retesting. But first, some exercised. Half of the exercising group walked or jogged before the testing; half did not. Ditto for the sedentary group: Half exercised that day for the first time since the start of the study; the rest did not. The earlier tests of memory and mood were repeated. The results were, in certain aspects, a surprise. As expected, many of the volunteers who’d been exercising for the past month significantly improved their scores on the memory and mood tests. But not all of them did. In general, those volunteers who had exercised for the past month *and* who worked out on the day of retesting performed the best on the memory exam. They also tended to report less anxiety than other volunteers.

Those who had exercised during the preceding month but not on the day of testing generally did better on the memory test than those who had been sedentary, but did not perform nearly as well as those who had worked out that morning. Interestingly, while exercising before the test didn’t improve the memory scores of those who’d remained sedentary for the past month, it did increase their self-reported anxiety levels. They were more jittery than they had been on the first lab visit. Perhaps most intriguing, though, was what the researchers discovered when they compared the volunteers’ BDNF gene variants and their scores on the memory test. They found that those with the variant that blunts BDNF production after exercise — a fairly common variation, existing in about 30 percent of people of European Caucasian heritage — did not improve their memories, even if they exercised regularly. (No consumer test exists to check for the variant.) What all of this means for people who are hoping that exercise will improve their minds is unclear, Dr. Bucci says, but it does suggest that the interplay of physical activity and brainpower is more complex than we have perhaps yet acknowledged. Some people’s ability to recall objects, for instance, “may respond less robustly” to exercise than other people’s, he says, if their genetic makeup doesn’t promote the release of BDNF. But the overall message of this study and of ongoing research in his lab, Dr. Bucci adds, is that exercise generally enhances the ability to remember. The people who did improve their memory test scores, he points out, were invariably those who’d exercised throughout the previous month and again the morning of the testing, suggesting a powerful cumulative effect from the exercise sessions, he says. More generally, Dr. Bucci says, there are many types of memory involving many different areas within the brain, and few seem unaffected by regular, moderate exercise, although the effects may be inconsistent from person to person. “The current data strongly suggests that people should be physically active” if they wish to enjoy a sturdy, unporous memory in the long term, Dr. Bucci says. Walk or jog regularly, in other words, and most of us can expect to continue recognizing our keys as keys. (Gretchen Reynolds, *New York Times*, May 30, 2012)

A 75-Year Harvard Study Finds What It Takes To Live A Happy Life

In June 2009, *The Atlantic* published a cover story on the Grant Study, one of the longest-running longitudinal studies of human development. The project, which began in 1938, has followed 268 Harvard undergraduate men for 75 years, measuring an astonishing range of psychological, anthropological, and physical traits—from personality type to IQ to

drinking habits to family relationships to “hanging length of his scrotum”—in an effort to determine what factors contribute most strongly to human flourishing. Recently, George Vaillant, who directed the study for more than three decades, published *Triumphs of Experience*, a summation of the insights the study has yielded. Among them: **“Alcoholism is a disorder of great destructive power.”** Alcoholism was the main cause of divorce between the Grant Study men and their wives; it was strongly correlated with neurosis and depression (which tended to follow alcohol abuse, rather than precede it); and—together with associated cigarette smoking—it was the single greatest contributor to their early morbidity and death. **Above a certain level, intelligence doesn’t matter.**

There was no significant difference in maximum income earned by men with IQs in the 110–115 range and men with IQs higher than 150. **Aging liberals have more sex.** Political ideology had no bearing on life satisfaction—but the most-conservative men ceased sexual relations at an average age of 68, while the most-liberal men had active sex lives into their 80s. “I have consulted urologists about this,” Vaillant writes. “They have no idea why it might be so.”

But the factor Vaillant returns to most insistently is the powerful correlation between the warmth of your relationships and your health and happiness in old age. After *The Atlantic*’s 2009 article was published, critics questioned the strength of this correlation. Vaillant revisited the data he had been studying since the 1960s for his book, an experience that further convinced him that what matters most in life are relationships. For instance, the 58 men who scored highest on measurements of “warm relationships” earned an average of \$141,000 a year more at their peak salaries (usually between ages 55 and 60) than the 31 men who scored lowest; the former were also three times more likely to have achieved professional success worthy of inclusion in *Who’s Who*. And, in a conclusion that surely would have pleased Freud, the findings suggest that **the warmth of your relationship with Mommy matters long into adulthood.** Specifically:

- * Men who had “warm” childhood relationships with their mothers earned an average of \$87,000 more a year than men whose mothers were uncaring.

- * Men who had poor childhood relationships with their mothers were much more likely to develop dementia when old.

- * Late in their professional lives, the men’s boyhood relationships with their mothers—but not with their fathers—were associated with effectiveness at work.

- * On the other hand, warm childhood relations with fathers correlated with lower rates of adult anxiety, greater enjoyment of vacations, and increased “life satisfaction” at age 75—whereas the warmth of childhood relationships with mothers had no significant bearing on life satisfaction at 75. Vaillant’s key takeaway, in his own words: “The seventy-five years and twenty million dollars expended on the Grant Study points ... to a straightforward five-word conclusion: ‘Happiness is love. Full stop.’” (Scott Stossel, *The Atlantic*, April 25, 2013)

Dance for good health

Dancing is a great way to stay healthy and feel fantastic. Source: body and soul

DANCING is a feel-good way to improve your fitness, whatever style you choose. Given the unique combination of physical exercise, social interaction and mental concentration - all set to music - it’s no wonder it has been found to help relieve stress, increase energy and improve strength and muscle tone. Research into the benefits of dancing is starting to mount up - so choose your favourite style and see the changes for yourself.

+ **Tango** This sensual and fast-moving dance from Buenos Aires, Argentina, is set to energetic, repetitive music and the male partner takes the lead around the floor.

- * Body benefits: “The tango is a low dance - your knees are constantly bent so you’re getting a great workout in your legs and core,” says Chris Dempsey, manager of Arthur Murray Dance School in Sydney. “But the short, staccato movements that teach control, balance and body awareness are unique to tango.”

- * The proof: Canadian researchers studied two elderly groups: one took weekly Argentine tango classes and the other group walked. The tango group showed improvement in balance, posture and motor coordination, as well as performing significantly better at multi-tasking. And it seems the feel-good factor is genuine. A recent Australian National University study revealed tango’s effect on mood disorders. It found reduced feelings of depression and insomnia that lasted for months after the study had finished.

+ **Ballroom** (general) There are enough different types of ballroom dancing to suit every personality - the waltz is singled out below for its own particular benefits.

- * Body benefits: “Ballroom gives you a great all-over cardio workout, where you use your own body weight, similar to what you’d get from an intensive Pilates class,” Dempsey says. “You spend a lot of time bending low and using your legs to push up onto your toes. So it’s an especially good workout for legs and buttocks.”

- * The proof: Dr Joe Verghese, a neurologist at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, conducted a study on 469 men and women. Over five years he studied ways of staying active to reduce the risk of dementia and found ballroom dancing to be the most effective physical activity. The main reasons Verghese gave were that the “requirements of ballroom dancing, such as remembering the steps, moving in precise time to the music and adapting to the movements of one’s partner are mentally demanding exercises”.

+ **Waltz** It may look easy, but the waltz is not a cinch to master. During the American waltz, you transfer weight from one foot to another about 90 times a minute. And the Viennese waltz is twice as fast, one of the most difficult to master, Dempsey says.

- * Body benefits: “I use the waltz with beginners to teach control - there’s a lot of spinning and partner work - and to improve posture,” Dempsey says. Apparently it takes a lot of hard work to learn to look that effortless.

“Ladies aren’t ‘resting’ their arms on their partners’ - they’re holding them,” he says. This means strong, lean arms and shoulders. “The waltz is also great for all-over body and brain work, including memory.”

- * The proof: A study presented at the American Heart Association researched 110 heart failure patients and found that dancing the waltz three times a week for eight weeks improved cardiopulmonary (heart and lung) function as effectively as spending the same amount of time on a treadmill or bicycle.

+ **Salsa** It’s flirtatious, fast and a fusion of dance styles originating from the Caribbean and Latin and North America. Salsa can be danced solo, but it’s mostly done in couples.

* Body benefits: "Like most dances, the salsa works your core, toning abdominals and [promoting] a stronger, healthier lower back," Dempsey says. "But in the salsa, you're also shaking your hips fast. So you don't just get flat abs, you get boxer's abs. "You need to be aware of how you're holding yourself while dancing the salsa," he says.

"You lean forward and there are a lot of spins, which require you to have great posture and coordination. If you don't, you'll fall over."

* The proof: Salsa is a real source of happy endorphins, according to a study from the University of Derby in the UK. Moderately depressed volunteers who took lessons for nine weeks reported a significant boost to their mood by the end. Matt Birks, the university's senior lecturer in mental health, says the change in mood may have been further enhanced by "social interaction, shared experience, concentrating on learning a new skill and the confidence this can bring".

+ **Ballet** Romantic and blissfully elegant to watch, yet technical and difficult to perform as a professional, ballet has become a lot more accessible recently. The choreographed moves that were once only found in ballet schools and on the stage are now a hit in gyms and yoga studios around the country.

* Body benefits: "Ballet practice improves flexibility and muscle strength and tone; it has the advantage of working the entire body," says ballet teacher Eve Lawson, from the Australian Ballet. "In particular, it strengthens abdominal and core muscles and improves posture. "It can also be an outlet, helping to relieve stress and anxiety," she says. In addition to sweating out toxins, there is a "decreased risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease and bone loss".

* The proof: A study from the UK compared dancers from the Royal Ballet with top British swimmers, including Olympians. They found the ballet dancers scored higher than the swimmers in seven out of 10 areas of overall fitness. (Kris Franken, *The Sunday Telegraph*, April 20, 2013)

Six big health questions answered

Health choices: is butter or margarine better for you? Source: body and soul. IS red wine really better than white? And should you steam or boil your veges? Charmaine Yabsley finds out which choice is best.

1. MARGARINE OR BUTTER?

Verdict: Margarine

"While we don't need spreads on our breads, margarine is the healthiest option as it is a blend of sunflower, canola and olive oils. If you must use a spread, choose a low-fat, low-salt margarine," says dietitian Milena Katz. "Unlike in the UK and the US, our margarine is actually quite good, as it is low in trans fats and salt, so it doesn't have too many negative effects on our health."

Saturated fats are bad for the heart, so buy a premium margarine as the cheap options have more trans fats. "More expensive margarine has added plant sterols which help to lower cholesterol levels," Katz says. For those who use butter because they think it's natural, it's time to re-evaluate the sandwich strategy. "Butter is still processed," Katz says. "There are no extra nutrients in butter, either, compared to margarine. In fact, margarine has added vitamin D, which, as a nation, we're deficient in." Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to cancers, brittle bone diseases and general ill health.

2. TAP WATER OR VITAMIN WATER?

Verdict: Tap water

"Don't waste your money on vitamin water," Katz says. "It's full of sugar - around seven teaspoons per bottle - and the amount of vitamins in them are so low it won't have any impact. It's really no different to drinking cola." So, stick to your tap water for free nutritional benefits. "Ideally, use a filter, although it's not strictly necessary," Katz says.

3. SUPPLEMENTS OR FRESH FRUIT AND VEG?

Verdict: Five veg a day

Dietitian Tara Diversi, author of *The Good Enough Diet* (Wiley) says: "Vitamins will never replace the nutritional benefits you receive from fresh fruit and vegetables. They contain dietary fibre, which is rich in probiotics. This improves your gut bacteria, so you will better absorb the minerals in the food." Diversi says that while vitamins and supplements have their place, it is important not to "use them as a replacement or as an insurance against ill health".

Be aware that a healthy lifestyle and waistline is not just about following the five-a-day rule. "Having at least five servings of fruit and vegetables is great, but you should focus on eating as many vegetables as you can before going onto your fruit portions," Diversi says. "It's also a good idea to avoid starchy vegetables, such as potatoes, sweet potatoes or pumpkin if you're watching your weight."

Finally, are frozen vegetables an acceptable option or should you always opt for fresh? "Frozen produce is just as good as fresh - the important thing is that you're consistently eating vegetables," Diversi says.

4. VEGETARIAN OR CARNIVORE?

Verdict: A combination

"A balance between the two is ideal," Diversi says. "If you eat too much meat there are a lot of consequences to your health. However, many vegetarians don't eat a balanced diet, either - some opt for lollies and white rice for a quick energy hit." For an ideal eating plan, follow these simple rules: "Choose your lean meat, add a carbohydrate and choose some non-starchy vegetables," Diversi says. "If you're vegetarian then you simply must eat legumes and lentils, which are full of protein." The fibre in lentils and legumes can make it difficult to absorb iron, so eat citrus fruits, add vinegary dressings to your salads and eat other acidic ingredients to help keep your energy levels up.

"If you're planning on becoming a vegetarian, see a dietitian to ensure you're doing it right and avoid risks of bowel cancer and digestion problems," Diversi says.

5. RED WINE OR WHITE WINE?

Verdict: Red wine

A glass of cold white wine may hit the spot, but for health reasons you are better off uncorking a bottle of red. "Red wine contains resveratrol, which is found in the skin of the grapes. White wine doesn't contain this," Katz says.

"Resveratrol, along with antioxidants in red wine, are believed to help heart health."

Resveratrol has been linked to preventing diabetes, cancers, prostate disease and Alzheimer's. To ensure you're getting the benefits of the resveratrol, sip your wine slowly and remember that two glasses a day is more than plenty. "We should all have at least two alcohol-free days every week, too," Katz says.

6. STEAM OR BOIL?

Verdict: Steam

"Don't overcook vegetables," Diversi warns. "When steaming veg, keep them a little underdone so you retain most of the vitamins." And if you are cooking your vegies in the microwave, Diversi says, "Use very little water, if any. Then use whatever liquid has collected at the bottom of the bowl as a sauce to pour over your meal. That liquid contains all the nutrients."

> PMS pop quiz

How well do you understand hormonal changes?

1. Which of these spices may help ease the symptoms of PMS?

a) Cloves b) Saffron c) Oregano d) Cinnamon

2. Which of the following can make PMS worse?

a) Stress b) The pill c) Exercise d) Chocolate

3. You may be able to reduce cramping by eliminating which of the substances below from your diet?

a) Paracetamol b) Caffeine c) Sugar d) Artificial sweeteners

4. One of the following minerals has been shown to reduce the effects of PMS:

a) Calcium b) Magnesium c) Aluminium d) Zinc

5. In which age group are you most likely to experience moderate to severe PMS?

a) 15-20 years old b) 21-25 years old c) 26-30 years old d) 30 years old and over

Answers: 1 (b); 2 (a); 3 (d); 4 (a); 5 (d). (Belinda Fletcher, *The Telegraph*, May 04, 2013)

Bra Dependency "Makes Breasts Sag"

Breasts gain no benefit from bras and women would do better to go without, according to French research. Professor Jean-Denis Rouillon of Besancon University has spent 15 years studying the breast movement of 330 women and now claims that bras are a "false necessity". What is more, he says that women would be better off being subjected to the gravity than constantly wearing a bra.

Rouillon also claimed that breasts become "dependent" on bra support, so the supporting muscle is under-used and degrades more quickly as a result. Interestingly, several of the participants in the study reported an easing of lower back pain once they stopped wearing a bra. (*bodyandsoul.com*, May 5, 2013)

13 health warnings written all over your face

EVERYONE knows a lucky so-and-so who hates the gym, eats junk food and drinks wine every night, yet somehow maintains an enviably tiny and firm figure. But some experts are warning that, in fact, there really is no such thing as a free lunch — because regardless of what your body looks like, your face will tell the truth about your bad habits. 'You can tell a lot about someone's lifestyle from their face, including what their diet is like and how much they smoke or drink,' says dermatologist Dr Tabi Leslie. Alcohol seems to be one of the worst offenders for the face. Dr Michael Prager, a cosmetic surgeon, says he is treating increasing numbers of women whose faces have become podgy, pallid and wrinkly because of their nightly wine habit. 'They often say to me: "My mother looked so well at my age, I don't understand why I look so much older." I tell them it's probably because their mother didn't drink so much,' he says. But that's not the only lifestyle habit that could be damaging your looks — stress, over-exercising, and even becoming vegetarian have an impact, as we reveal here ...

FACE SHAPE

THIN AND GAUNT

Culprits: Over-exercising, yo-yo dieting. Although exercise is crucial for healthy body and skin, too much can leave us with hollow, saggy cheeks, says Dr Aamer Khan, medical director of the Harley Street Skin Clinic. 'It's known as the runner's face but any excessive cardiovascular exercise that raises the heart rate will do it — cyclists have the same look. 'Initially when you start running, the face goes red as the blood vessels widen to get oxygen flowing round the body. 'But after 15 minutes, as the muscles start to require more oxygen, the blood starts to be diverted away from the face, meaning the fat pads in the cheeks are deprived of oxygen and start to die off slowly.

'If you run excessively, you'll have a great heart and lungs, but you'll lose the plumpness in the cheeks, and look emaciated.' Varying your workouts with different types of exercise, such as weight-training or yoga, will help prevent this. Ditching cigarettes will also have an effect, he adds, as toxins in cigarettes also attack the blood supply to the fat pads in the cheeks, exacerbating the narrowed face. And avoid faddy crash diets, as these can take their toll on your looks, warns dermatologist Dr Nick Lowe of the Cranley Clinic. 'Yo-yo dieters regularly lose weight on the face then quickly put it back on. This rapid fluctuation in weight causes the skin to stretch and lose elasticity — so you start to have excess skin and jowls.'

PUDGY AND SAGGY

Culprits: Alcohol, lack of exercise. Cosmetic surgeon Dr Prager says alcohol 'stresses the body, causing you to produce the hormone cortisol'. This hormone causes more fat to collect around the face, as well as triggering water retention around the cheeks, leaving a 'bloated-looking face'. Furthermore, alcohol is also known to overstimulate the parotid — or salivary — glands, which sit on either side where the neck meets the jaw, adds Dr Khan. 'Excessive drinking causes these glands to become bigger which gives that chubby, jowly look. If you stop drinking or cut down, you'll soon notice an improvement.' Alcohol is 50 per cent sugar, and there's growing evidence that a diet high in sugar can age the skin by a process called glycolisation. Here, molecules produced when sugar is broken down slow the production of collagen and elastin fibres, the building blocks of skin. 'The face becomes saggy and loses elasticity, facial muscle and shape in general so it looks podgy,' says Dr Prager. 'Between 20 and 30 you can get away with murder, but if you carry on drinking like that, by your 40th birthday the damage will be done.'

Regular exercise is also essential for keeping the skin on the face healthy and youthful. In 2010, researchers at the University of St Andrews released images of three people showing what they would look like in 20 years' time if they did no exercise — inactive people were more at risk of sagging, loose skin on the neck and fattening in the forehead and eye area. Exercise keeps blood circulating to the skin, maintaining collagen production.

SKIN WRINKLES

Culprit: Not wearing sun block. You can tell what's caused a wrinkle just by looking at it, says Chris Griffiths, professor of dermatology and an expert on ageing. 'Fine, crepey wrinkles occur with age, but coarse, deeper wrinkles tend to be from the sun.' Dr Aamer Khan adds that lines and ridges under the eyes tend to be a sign of too much time spent in the sun. 'The whole face will be hit, but the hair will protect the forehead, so generally it's the areas under the eyes that are most affected. 'The skin is thinner here, too, and so more vulnerable to wrinkling.'

PALLID COMPLEXION

Culprits: Not eating your greens, being overweight. In March last year, researchers at the University of St Andrews published research showing that eating just three portions of fruit and vegetables a day can give skin a natural glow akin to a suntan within weeks. Ross Whitehead, research fellow at the university, who led the study, explains: 'Fruit and vegetables contain pigments called carotenoids, which give carrots their orange colour, for example, and tomatoes their red colour. When we eat them, these pigments get deposited on the skin, creating a glow.' He adds that an overweight person may have to consume more fruit and vegetables in order to get the glow. Carotenoid pigments are fat-soluble, meaning they are absorbed by fat in the body.

'The more fat a person has under the skin, the more the visibility of these pigments might be obscured.' Meanwhile, a natural flush to the cheeks can also indicate cardiovascular fitness, adds Whitehead. 'Oxygenated blood has a redder tinge to it than deoxygenated blood, so someone who exercises and has a strong heart will have a permanent redness to their cheeks. So a pale complexion might indicate someone who doesn't do a lot of exercise.'

DARK RINGS ON THE NECK

Culprits: Sugary food. Discoloured, brownish-grey patches on the neck can be a warning sign for Type 2 diabetes, a condition linked to a diet high in sugars and carbohydrates. Known as acanthosis nigricans, the patches suggest high levels of the hormone insulin, involved in breaking down sugar in the body. They can start small, but if the underlying cause is not treated, may spread to take over the whole neck. 'It's very much a feature of obesity and diabetes, and tends to appear on the armpits and sometimes the neck,' says diabetes expert Dr David Price. 'It suggests the insulin is not working very well, so the body is having to produce a lot more of it. Losing weight is the best treatment for this.'

FLUSHED SKIN

Culprits: Caffeine, lack of sunlight. Dr Aamer Khan says drinking too much coffee can dehydrate the skin, giving it a red and parched appearance. 'If you drink more than three cups a day, for each one you need to drink an extra glass of water to counter the effects,' he advises. Low levels of vitamin D, formed in the body when sunlight hits the skin, can also cause redness in the face, adds Dr Khan. This is because the vitamin is vital for the creation of new skin cells, so a deficiency can lead to flaky, red skin. Around one in ten of the population is thought to suffer with some degree of rosacea, a chronic skin condition that starts with flushing in the face and can progress to permanent redness, spots and blood vessels in the skin becoming visible. Rosacea can run in families, but the condition is triggered or made worse by alcohol, coffee and spicy food, says dermatologist Dr Tabi Leslie. 'Alcohol and caffeine seem to dilate the blood vessels, which can aggravate the rash on the face.'

SPOTS

Culprits: Dairy foods and Atkins-style diets. It's now widely recognised that acne is genetic rather than lifestyle related. However, there is increasing evidence that in some cases excess dairy intake or high-calorie diets may be a contributory factor to the severity of the condition,' says Dr Leslie. The reasons are unclear, but some experts suggest that the compound insulin growth factor-1, which is found in milk (and is also naturally occurring in humans), might be to blame. Dr Khan adds that Atkins-style diets that promote high protein and low carbohydrate intake may trigger acne, too. 'Protein contains certain amino acids which encourage production of hormones such as testosterone which can cause acne,' he says. A diet high in omega-3 (found in oily fish such as salmon or mackerel), fresh fruit and vegetables is thought to be the best way to prevent or reduce acne. Omega-3s have been shown to control the production of sebum — the oil produced naturally by the skin that can cause acne.

MOUTH CRACKS AT SIDE OF MOUTH

Culprit: Not eating your greens. Cracks in the corner of the mouth — angular stomatitis — can be a sign of vitamin B deficiency, says dermatologist Dr Leslie. Vitamin B has anti-inflammatory properties and too little is linked to redness and cracking. 'You may also have a thickened tongue. Meanwhile, a vitamin C deficiency can result in sore, cracked lips.' Dr Leslie adds that both these vitamins are found in many fruit and vegetables, with vitamin B particularly high in peas and wholegrains and vitamin C high in oranges and peppers.

SHRINKING TEETH

Culprits: Stress, fatty and spicy foods. 'A person's dental age can be quite distinct from their chronological age,' says dentist Dr Ben Atkins. Stress can cause people to grind their teeth at night or clench in the day, which can reduce the length of the teeth, he explains. 'Often people don't realise they're doing it. I see people who've lost 50 to 80 per cent of their teeth because of this, causing the actual face height to shrink in size, too.' Mouth guards can be worn at night, but Dr Atkins says clearly it's also vital to work out the cause of your anxiety. Excess stomach acid from a fatty diet or drinking too much alcohol can also wear away the teeth, he adds. 'Eating lots of high-fat and spicy foods like curry means you'll produce more acid, and if you suffer reflux, where there is a weakness in the valve between the gullet and the stomach, the acid can splash up the gullet into the mouth and damage the teeth. 'You'll see your teeth shrinking in size and may notice the back surfaces of your teeth feel very smooth.'

PALE, RECEDING GUMS

Culprits: Cigarettes. Tooth decay is usually linked to sugary snacks, but gum disease is more strongly linked to smoking, says Dr Atkins. 'The damage to the blood supply in the gums from smoking may cause them to recede, and they can also start to look pale and leathery — in the same way a fish does when you smoke it. That's essentially what you're doing to your mouth when you smoke a cigarette.'

WATERY EYES

Culprits: Too much screen time, lack of sleep. Watery eyes are usually, surprisingly, a tell-tale sign that you actually have dry eyes — this is because the tear glands react by overproducing tears, says Shamina Asif, from the College of Optometrists. Often this is caused by spending too much time at a computer. 'When you're concentrating on a screen you're less likely to blink, and it's blinking that generates tears and lubricates the eyes,' she says. 'This is why a lack of sleep also contributes to dryness — during sleep your eyes repair themselves and produce tears.' Constant blinking and watery eyes are the most common symptoms, she says.

'If you suffer from dry eyes, make sure you take regular screen breaks, and consciously remember to blink regularly,' she says. 'And drink plenty of water to keep hydrated.'

DARK CIRCLES

Culprits: Vegetarian diet, lack of sleep. A lack of iron — anaemia — may be to blame for dark circles under your eyes, suggests Dr Aamer Khan. This problem can be common in vegetarians, as meat is a major source of the nutrient. 'Iron is needed for the turnover of tissue, so a deficiency slows down the creation of new skin and can cause the face to look pale and dark under the eyes.' Furthermore, Dr Khan adds that tiredness can cause blood vessels in the skin to dilate. The skin under the eyes is particularly thin, meaning that the blueish tinge of these blood vessels will be seen more acutely (the skin makes blood in vessels appear blue, although it is actually red), adding to the dark circles.

RINGS AROUND THE IRIS AND LUMPS ON THE EYELID

Culprits: Fatty diet. White rings in the iris, known as arcus senilis, and yellow plaques or lumps around the eyelids, known as xanthelasma, can both be signs of high cholesterol, often linked to a diet rich in high-fat foods. The excess cholesterol is deposited around the eye because it has a rich blood supply. 'Studies have shown that people with arcus senilis and xanthelasma have a higher risk of developing heart disease,' says Ms Asif.

She recommends seeing your GP for a check if you are worried about your cholesterol levels.

PEARL ON YOUR EYEBALL

Culprits: Not wearing sunglasses, surfing. Not shielding your eyes in bright sunlight can leave you at raised risk of a condition called pinguecula. This causes a whitish-yellow 'pearly' lesion or blister on the eyeball, that's usually just next to the iris on the side closest to the nose. It may remain small or grow large enough to interfere with vision. If it starts to extend over the iris, and becomes triangular-shaped, this is known as a pterygium. These growths, also known as Surfer's eye — due to the fact they are more common in people who spend a lot of time in the sun — can sometimes interfere with vision. 'Both pinguecula and pterygiums are pretty common — I see around two patients a day with this,' says Shamina Asif. 'UV light is one of the main risk factors, so it's important to wear sunglasses to stop it from getting worse or preventing it from occurring in the first place.' The condition tends to be slow-growing, and does not usually require treatment, but if it starts to cause irritation, lubricating eyedrops or a short course of steroid eyedrops can help. If it interferes with vision, it can be surgically removed under local anaesthetic. (Chloe Lambert, *Daily Mai*, May 14, 2013)

Religion

Trinity Church Split on How to Manage \$2 Billion Legacy of a Queen

There has never been any doubt that Trinity Church is wealthy. But the extent of its wealth has long been a mystery; guessed at by many, known by few. Now, however, after a lawsuit filed by a disenchanting parishioner, the church has offered an estimate of the value of its assets: more than \$2 billion.

The Episcopal parish, known as Trinity Wall Street, traces its holdings to a gift of 215 acres of prime Manhattan farmland donated in 1705 by Queen Anne of England. Since then, the church has parlayed that gift into a rich portfolio of office buildings, stock investments and, soon, mixed-use residential development. The parish's good fortune has become an issue in the historic congregation, which has been racked by infighting in recent years over whether the church should be spending more money to help the poor and spread the faith, in New York and around the world. Differences over the parish's mission and direction last year led nearly half the 22-member vestry — an august collection of corporate executives and philanthropists — to resign or be pushed out, after at least seven of them asked, unsuccessfully, that the rector himself step down. Over the years, the church has sold or given away much of the original 215 acres from Queen Anne, but it has 14 acres, including 5.5 million square feet of commercial real estate. It reported \$158 million in real estate revenue for 2011, the majority of which went toward maintaining and supporting its real estate operations, the financial statement indicates. Of the \$38 million left for the church's operating budget, some \$4 million was spent on communications, \$3 million on philanthropic grant spending and \$2.5 million on the church's music program, church officials said. Nearly \$6 million went to maintain Trinity's historic properties, including the main church building, which was built in 1846; St. Paul's Chapel; and several cemeteries, where luminaries including Alexander Hamilton and Edward I. Koch are buried. The remainder went into the church's equity investment portfolio. Critics argue that the church could have a higher profile as a beacon of charity and Episcopal belief. "I felt that the church was being too corporate and wasn't acting on its values," said Jeremy C. Bates, the congregant who filed the lawsuit and a former leader of the church's Congregational Council.

But not all parishioners agree. "Given the resources, I think they do exactly what they should be doing," said Susan V. Berresford, a current member of the vestry and the former head of the Ford Foundation. "This, I think, is a first-class philanthropic operation and one that is using its resources very wisely." The vast majority of the parish's property is in Hudson Square, a commercial neighborhood next to the Manhattan entrance to the Holland Tunnel. These days, the area's

hulking prewar industrial buildings, designed for use by printing companies, are increasingly occupied by creative and technology companies, with restaurants and galleries on the street level.

"The Trinity Church properties are now among the most valuable in all of New York City, because they are sitting on the edge of the hottest neighborhoods in the city — SoHo, TriBeCa and Greenwich Village," said Mitchell L. Moss, a professor of urban policy and planning at New York University. "Trinity has been either very wise or very prudent, but they have let the market mature around them, and now they are ready to take advantage of it." The church, which calls itself "one of the largest landowners in Manhattan," has also been building an equity investment portfolio that was worth about \$160 million in 2011. And the value of Trinity's real estate holdings is expected to grow because rezoning of much of the church's land will allow up to 3,200 new residential units, with the first large project planned for Duarte Square on Canal Street. "The legacy of Queen Anne is that Trinity Church is going to prosper in the 21st century," Mr. Moss said. "Who says that the empire doesn't live on?"

Mr. Bates, who says he wants the church to be more accountable to its members, argues in his lawsuit that the parish vestry, which acts largely as Trinity's board of directors, is being elected contrary to the terms of the church's original 1697 charter. Mr. Bates claims that each vestry candidate must receive a majority of parishioners' votes to be elected. The church says that even one "yes" vote is enough if the candidate is uncontested; all the seats are uncontested. The parish has asked for the suit, filed in State Supreme Court in Manhattan, to be dismissed. The dispute over spending and governance is, in part, a dispute over the leadership of the Rev. James H. Cooper, who has been the church's rector since 2004. "You have diminished Trinity Church, and you have created a glaring atmosphere of deceit," wrote one longtime vestry member, Lorraine LaHuta, in her 2012 resignation letter.

The vestry resignations last year caused a minor media splash, as did Trinity's tumultuous relationship with the Occupy Wall Street protests in 2011. Trinity gave refuge and bathroom space to protesters at a community center, Charlotte's Place, but then stood by as protesters were arrested for trespassing on the part of Duarte Square owned by the church. The protesters were furious, and camped out outside Trinity for months.

Mr. Cooper, 68, weathered the storms, and this year helped select a new vestry more supportive of his leadership. But he also announced in February that he was planning to resign in 2015 — a decision he called unrelated to the recent turmoil. He said he believed the rezoning, which could turn Trinity's holdings into a more vibrant neighborhood, would be remembered as one of the major accomplishments of Trinity during his time as rector.

The church agreed with one complaint in the lawsuit: Mr. Bates's assertion that he should be entitled to see the church's financial statement. The 2011 statement was released to the public in March; the 2012 statement is due out in May. Trinity has released other estimates of its wealth over its 315-year history, but none recently. From 1909 to 1939, parishioners could find bare-bones annual statements at their pews; before that, the last disclosures beyond the vestry were in 1814. "Trinity is moving more and more toward a transparent, modern system of governance, though not without bumps and bruises and pain," said Mr. Cooper, adding that he supported the disclosure.

Some details are not included on the form, church officials said, like Mr. Cooper's \$475,000 annual salary — which rises to a total compensation of \$1.3 million when his pension and the estimated cost of his residence in a \$5.5 million, church-owned SoHo town house are added. For at least some of the defecting vestrymen — who complained Mr. Cooper was circumventing them in decision-making, subverting a review of his leadership and de-emphasizing religious education and philanthropy while obsessing about reconstructing the church's administrative headquarters at 74 Trinity Place — those numbers rankle.

Mr. Cooper said he believed the church had the right balance between ministry, charity and its real estate business. "Of course I do, and so does the current vestry," he said, adding that the goal of nurturing Trinity's property holdings is to increase the future operating budget for philanthropy and church operations.

The church's annual grants, some of which go to support parishes in Africa, remained stable during the recent recession, he added, and were now at \$3.2 million, their highest level since 1991. In addition, he said nearly all of Trinity's spending — from its free concerts to its open doors to hosting millions of tourists a year — was a "gift to the city." Mr. Cooper seemed tired as he sat surrounded by portraits of former rectors in a church office. "I'm a strong believer that leadership has seasons, and my season is in the eighth or ninth inning of the game," he said. ([Sharon Otterman, New York Times](#), April 24, 2013)

Why Popes Never Have to Say Sorry

How do you atone for something terrible, like the Inquisition? Joseph Ratzinger attempted to do just that for the Roman Catholic Church during a grandiose display of Vatican penance — the Day of Pardon on March 12, 2000, a ritual presided over by Pope John Paul II and meant to purify two millennia of church history. In the presence of a wooden crucifix that had survived every siege of Rome since the 15th century, high-ranking Cardinals and bishops stood up to confess to sins against indigenous peoples, women, Jews, cultural minorities and other Christians and religions. Ratzinger was the appropriate choice to represent the fearsome Holy Office of the Inquisition: the German Cardinal was, at the time, head of its historical successor, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. When his turn came, Ratzinger, the church's premier theologian, intoned a short prayer that said "that even men of the church, in the name of faith and morals, have sometimes used methods not in keeping with the Gospel in the solemn duty of defending the truth."

If you detect ambivalence in those words, you are on the road to understanding the difficulty Ratzinger — now Pope Benedict XVI — faces in leading the Catholic Church to properly atone for another stain on its history: the decades of cases of child abuse by priests and cover-ups by their bishops. And while a well-placed Cardinal has publicly speculated that Benedict will deliver a mea culpa in early June, the words of that apology — if that is what it proves to be — will be severely limited by theology, history and the very person and office of the Pope. It is unlikely to satisfy the many members of Benedict's flock who want a very modern kind of accountability, not just mealy-mouthed declarations buttressed by arcane religious philosophy. "Someone once told me that if the church survived the Inquisition, it can survive this," says Olan Horne, 50, an American victim of priestly abuse. "But these are different times. And right now, the modern world is wrapping its head around the Catholic Church in a major way." The crisis facing the church is deeply complicated by the fact that in 1980, as Archbishop of Munich, the future Benedict XVI appears to have mismanaged the assignment of an accused pedophile priest under his charge. That revelation — and questions about Ratzinger's subsequent oversight of cases as a top Vatican official — has been the trigger in turning a rolling series of national scandals into an epic and existential test for the

universal church, its leader and its faithful alike. It has blunted Benedict's ambitious enterprise of re-evangelizing Europe, the old Christendom. Over the past two months, the Pope has led the Holy See's shift from silence and denial to calls to face the enemies from within the church. What is still missing, however, is any mention of the Holy Father's alleged role in the scandal. Can the Pope, the living embodiment of the ancient Gospel and absolute spiritual leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, publicly atone for his sins and yet preserve the theological impregnability of the papacy?

Without alluding to the crisis, Benedict told his May 26 audience in St. Peter's Square that "not even the Pope can do what he wants. On the contrary, the Pope is the guardian of obedience to Christ, to his Word."

Benedict now seems to understand the stakes. But Alberto Melloni, a church historian at the University of Modena, says other power brokers in the Vatican think the church can just ride out the storm. "They don't realize the deep bitterness among the faithful, the isolation of the clergy. We can't predict where this is going to wind up." Speaking to TIME, a senior Vatican official foresees immense consequences for the entire church. "History comes down to certain key episodes," he says. "We're facing one of those moments now."

At the Heart of the Darkness

In the end, the test is not about doctrine or dogma, not even about the wording of mea culpas and the resignation or prosecution of prelates. It is, rather, about the voices of children finally crying out, long after their childhood. Listen to Bernie McDaid's story and you will know why St. Peter's trembles.

"He grabbed me, tickling and wrestling like I did with my dad, and I thought at first it was fun," McDaid, who grew up in Salem, Mass., says of a parish priest. "But then something changed ... He started grabbing my genitals. I felt him rubbing against me from behind ... I was so scared. I knew this was so wrong. I looked out the window. I started praying." That would happen again and again over three years. McDaid's devout mother was delighted whenever the priest arrived to pick up her son, just 11 when the abuse started, to join other boys on trips to the beach. But, recalls McDaid, now 54, "the last boy out of the car was the one who would get molested." He finally spoke to his dad, who then took him to a priest from the next town to report what had happened. "We waited for months. Then there was a rotation of priests. He left, but they made it look like a natural progression. They celebrated him with cake and ice cream." The boy was left in silence and with his secret shame. The priest, Father Joseph Birmingham, went on to abuse boys in three other parishes in the Boston area before he died in 1989.

"There's a belief system," says McDaid today, "that the priest and the bishop and the Pope himself would always be right. The people gave them the power because it was supposed to be a force for good. It was the power of God." Now, he goes on, "people are gasping for breath ... They don't know where to put their faith." He stops and asks, knowing there is yet no answer, "What do I do when I pray?"

The Gospel of St. Mark prescribes a fate for those who harm children: "And whoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." But the outrage embodied in those words has been absent in much of the church's response to crimes committed by its priests. For years, offending clerics were, at most, banished to silence and distant monasteries or to therapy or sometimes defrocked for what in civilian cases would have earned the guilty long prison terms.

Today the Vatican appears to be advising bishops in places from India to Italy to quickly remand new cases to civilian authorities. But how can it remedy past injustices? A mea culpa — literally, an acceptance of personal guilt — would be a start, and Benedict has a draft to work from: the letter he wrote to Catholics in Ireland on March 19 in the wake of sex scandals that have debilitated the church there. "You have suffered grievously and I am truly sorry," Benedict wrote. "I know that nothing can undo the wrong you have endured. Your trust has been betrayed and your dignity has been violated. Many of you found that, when you were courageous enough to speak of what happened to you, no one would listen ... It is understandable that you find it hard to forgive or be reconciled with the Church. In her name, I openly express the shame and remorse that we all feel."

The words are moving, and for some Catholics, it may be enough to hear the Pope express remorse this way. But Benedict has also talked of penance. In the language of the church, the sacrament of penance involves confession and then a priestly absolution of the sinner. But what kind of penance would a Pope with fingerprints on the controversy have to perform? There lies an intricate theological problem.

As the crisis grew in March and went on into April, many in the Vatican worried about the effect it would have on the papal magisterium — the historic, cumulative and majestic authority of the Pope to teach and preach the will of God. Vatican officials are concerned that a mea culpa would diminish the magisterium, which has been integral to the papacy's ability to project power in the world throughout its history, from the humiliation of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV at Canossa in the 11th century to the humbling of Soviet power in Poland in the 20th. It plays a key role in the doctrine of papal infallibility, which declares that the Pope is never in error when he issues teachings ex cathedra — that is, elucidating dogma from the throne of St. Peter. It is tied up in the traditional prerogatives of that Apostle, to whom was given the power "to bind and loose" in heaven and on earth — in rough terms, the church's ability to open the gates of heaven to you or damn you to hell because it will always be holier than thou.

A truly successful mea culpa and penance for the abuse scandal must preserve the magisterium while dealing with these facts: Ratzinger, both in his role as the local bishop in Munich from 1977 to 1981 and as the overseer of universal doctrine in Rome, was very much part of a system that had badly underestimated and in some cases enabled the rot of clergy abuse that spread through the church in the past half-century. An effective mea culpa must assuage the faithful but still be couched in such a way that the shortcomings of the prepapal administrative record of Ratzinger are admitted and atoned for separately from the deeds of Benedict XVI, the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. In that regard, the letter to the Irish faithful, while a model, has limited utility. The Pope was merely apologizing for errors committed by the hierarchy of Ireland, not for anything he or, indeed, the Holy See may have done, much less the mystical entity called the Church, the bride of Christ. Presented with the scenario of a personal apology by the human embodiment of the church, a well-placed Vatican official sighed as he weighed the theological and historical implications. "It's dangerous," he said. "It's dangerous."

When the Church Is a State

"In the end, the only sad thing is that sometimes these cases took time," a Vatican insider says, describing the fact that most of the incidents of sexual abuse are decades old. But that prompts a question: Why didn't the church simply report to the civil authorities the crimes its priests were suspected of committing?

Church officials defensively point out that almost all the alleged crimes at the heart of the current crisis were part of a social milieu in which child sexual abuse was rarely prosecuted, if discussed at all. But nowhere was there a more systemic

tendency to cover up the shame and scandal than in Catholic parishes and orphanages entrusted with the care of the young — which showed no compunction about avoiding the civil authorities altogether. Even now, with the Vatican pressing bishops to turn in errant priests, some cling to the old ethos. In early April, the eccentric Archbishop Dadeus Grings of Porto Alegre, Brazil, told the newspaper *O Globo* that priestly abuse was a matter of internal church discipline, not something to report to the police. "For the church to go and accuse its own sons would be a little strange," Grings, 73, reportedly said.

That mind-set has been deeply ingrained by history. The church is hard-wired with extraterritorial prerogatives that go back more than a millennium. The Catholic Church believes it is Christ's representative on earth, with all the sinlessness and omnipotent authority of its Saviour. The statesmen of the church have always known that to preserve that authority, the realm of the Popes could not simply be an otherworldly City of God. It also had to be an earthly power, if not equipped with military divisions (which it once possessed) then at least wielding the clout of secular government. The church must be a state.

That became more imperative as the secular authority of the papal states in Italy was stripped away by French and Spanish monarchs, Napoleon and Garibaldi, Mussolini and Hitler. The historian Melloni points out that the papacy was able to take advantage of its weakened condition to buttress support among the faithful by resorting to *vittimismo*, playing the victim and blaming others for preying on the church. "This actually had the effect of raising the devotion to the Pope," he says. That was the legacy of the 32-year reign of Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti, Pope Pius IX, who stage-managed the First Vatican Council into approving infallibility in 1869 with a suspect majority of bishops. In obedience to its divinely absolute monarch, the Vatican bureaucracy, the Roman Curia, became even more centralized and domineering. So even as the Pope lost his divisions, the empire of Christ based in Rome constructed a government to rival the civil institutions in countries where its clergy served the faithful. Churches and cathedrals became the embassies of God and his vicar, the Pope, in the secular world. In this system, any suspicion involving misbehavior by priests or nuns would instinctively be reported up the church's chain of command rather than to — heaven forbid — the district attorney's office. The overriding goal that trickled down to parishes was maintaining a cynical secrecy: avoiding scandal and preserving the good name of the church at any expense — a propensity made worse by the fact that the Curia was run by men versed in courtly skulduggery. In the cases of pedophilia, that meant the knee-jerk priorities were church and clergy, not the welfare of children.

As Cardinal Ratzinger, the Pope knew how to operate in the byzantine climate of the Italian-speaking Curia almost as soon as he arrived in Rome in 1981, according to a Vatican source who professes loyalty to the Pope. With Pope John Paul II uninterested in administration and often away from headquarters, Ratzinger became one of a handful of Cardinals vying for influence over the way the church was managed. He developed a reputation for decisive and principled action in his immediate purview of doctrine, though he was less transparent when it came to troublesome and embarrassing reports of sexual misbehavior by priests and bishops. But, says a longtime Vatican observer, Ratzinger "knew the place well and saw a lot of long knives." He appears to have chosen his battles carefully.

In 1995 he managed to force the removal of Cardinal Hans Hermann Groër as the Archbishop of Vienna, but, according to the *New York Times*, he did not fight to set up a fact-finding commission to investigate Groër's alleged molestation of young boys after it was blocked by John Paul II's personal secretary, Stanislaw Dziwisz (now Archbishop of Krakow) and the powerful Secretary of State, Cardinal Angelo Sodano (now dean of the College of Cardinals). Ratzinger, however, did get to see his student and friend Christoph Schönborn succeed Groër as Archbishop of Vienna. Though efficient, Ratzinger could also be shortsighted. In one case, he seemed more determined to preserve the church's dwindling clerical resources than to seek justice. In a case detailed in April by the Associated Press, a child-molester priest had requested to be defrocked, and the local bishop in Oakland, Calif., repeatedly sent letters to Ratzinger's office in Rome to try to have the procedure finalized. Not only did the case move slowly, but a 1985 letter signed by the Cardinal cautioned the bishop "to consider the good of the Universal Church" and cited "the young age" of the priest in delaying the defrocking.

Benedict XVI has his defenders, however, those who believe it is an injustice that he should be dragged into the center of the scandal. Even before ascending to the papacy, Ratzinger had helped police the crisis while most of his colleagues in Rome were still trying to sweep the allegations under the rug. Indeed, Ratzinger's policies, particularly after his office was assigned to oversee the most grievous cases in 2001, may have contributed to the decline in new incidents of clerical sex abuse. Just before his election as Pope, the Cardinal preached on Good Friday in 2005 of the need to eliminate the "filth" within the church's ranks. Once on the throne, Benedict swiftly banished to a monastery and a life of penance the satyr-like Rev. Marcial Maciel Degollado, the aging but influential founder of the Legionaries of Christ in Mexico, who had long been shielded by other top Curia officials, including John Paul II, from repeated accusations of sexual abuse. Most memorably, during a 2008 trip to the U.S., Benedict met five victims of clergy sex abuse in an unprecedented and unannounced encounter, without any press, at the Holy See's embassy in Washington. It was the most powerful pastoral gesture of Benedict's papacy — one he would repeat during a subsequent trip to Australia and in Malta this past April.

But in March 2010, German journalists revealed a record that complicates the Pope's reputation. In Munich in 1980, then Archbishop Ratzinger had personally authorized the transfer of an abusive priest, Peter Hullermann, from another part of Germany to his own archdiocese, ostensibly for therapy. But just days after his arrival, the priest was allowed to serve among the flock. Hullermann would be convicted of subsequent sexual assaults in 1986. The Vatican insists that, like other Archbishops, Ratzinger wasn't responsible for the parish assignments of priests, even those with a history of abusing children. A rising star, Ratzinger — a brilliant religious philosopher — had been put on an administrative track and was on the verge of his 1981 reassignment to Rome to work in the Curia. But defending the Pope by pointing out that he was following the standard operating procedures of the day or that he was not focused on his oversight duties no longer cuts it for most Catholics. "The impression it leaves is that these things simply weren't very important to the bishops and Cardinals," says Melloni. "To say he didn't know is not a defense; it's the problem."

Ratzinger's reputation for being a man of detail makes it hard to fathom that he knew nothing about Hullermann's return to active ministry. The Pope has yet to address this period of his career explicitly. But if he is to satisfy victims and their families, he will have to do so one day. That Benedict is personally touched by the crisis "doesn't surprise me at all," says abuse victim Horne, who met with the Pope in Washington in 2008. "He's complicit in this, as is two-thirds of the hierarchy." Horne is asking for a full accounting of past abuse, accompanied by new church rules for monitoring and responding to future cases, with victims given a central role in the process. He insists, however, that he and most other victims have no interest in bringing down either the Pope or the church. "We are looking for a moral response," he says.

What Can Benedict Do?

The Pope does not give interviews. His opinions must often be excavated from sermons, prayers and other carefully scripted

declarations. So this year, on Palm Sunday, Vaticanologists could only assume that Benedict had formed his perspective on the scandal all the world was talking about when, in the Italian he speaks with a Bavarian accent, he delivered a homily advising Christians to be courageous and not be intimidated by the "*chiacchiericcio*" — petty gossip — "of dominant opinions." Yet throughout the week that followed, the holiest of the Christian calendar, you could see the crisis etched on his face. Some in the Vatican called it sorrow, like unto Jesus' sorrow on the Cross. Benedict appeared worn and gloomy even when framed by the glories of St. Peter's Basilica and the liturgies that typically infuse him with vigor. After Easter, when there was no end to the stories of the sexual abuse of children at the hands of priests and how the incidents were covered up, the old guard in the Vatican ramped up *vittimismo*, blaming the media, atheists, homosexuals and moneygrubbing lawyers for exploiting the crisis. But that did little to buy sympathy or change the dominant opinion that Benedict's papacy was permanently damaged.

Since then, extraordinary measures have been taken — swift maneuvering for a 2,000-year-old organization led by a shy if determined 83-year-old theologian. In mid-April, Benedict held the reportedly teary-eyed, closed-door meeting with sex-abuse victims in Malta; at about the same time came a sped-up housecleaning, with the Pope accepting the resignations of several bishops — one for sex abuse, others for mishandling such cases. The Holy See also announced that the Legionaries of Christ was now under direct Vatican control. High-ranking members of the hierarchy spoke to journalists about the anguish they felt over the scandals. Then, on May 11, on his way to the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, the Pope answered previously submitted questions from the press on his plane. Though he spoke in the primly ecclesiastical style of Pontiffs, it was clear what he was talking about: "The greatest persecution of the church doesn't come from the enemies on the outside but is born from the sin within the church," he said, adding that "the church, therefore, has the profound need to learn penance again, to accept purification." And while forgiving sins may be a Christian imperative, Benedict said, "forgiveness does not replace justice."

That cry for justice was a sign that something was changing in Rome. It was not the only one. Just before the Fatima trip, a frisson went through the Vatican when Archbishop Schönborn of Vienna used an off-the-record meeting with reporters to criticize Cardinal Sodano, 82, a rare showdown between two powerful "princes of the church." In the published remarks, which Schönborn, 65, has not repudiated, the Austrian Archbishop took the former Vatican Secretary of State to task for his blame-the-outsiders defense of the church as well as for his role in the Groër case. With Schönborn's remarks coming just before the Pope's on the plane to Portugal, some Vatican watchers saw backstage melodrama: Was Schönborn serving as a stand-in for the Pope and singling out who was to blame for the sin within the church? If Sodano and other powerful players in Rome see the sequence of events as an orchestrated attempt to present Ratzinger as the lone Cardinal trying to combat sex abuse within an otherwise uncaring Vatican hierarchy, they are unlikely to accept it without challenge. "*Bollente*," says a Vatican insider, using the Italian word for "red hot" to describe the Sodano-Schönborn contretemps. As if to cap the period of dramatic moves by the papacy, a purportedly impromptu crowd of 150,000 people, organized by Catholic lay groups, showed up to cheer the Pope in St. Peter's Square the Sunday after his return from Portugal.

But is Benedict really about to embark on a shake-up of the entrenched hierarchy that covered up the sex-abuse cases for decades? Or is this just a more effective public relations strategy?

The concepts of penance and justice involve answering to God or man or both. Who will the Pope answer to? In the past, Ratzinger appeared to be ambivalent about papal atonement. The spectacular Day of Pardon in 2000 was John Paul II's idea, and Ratzinger, then a Cardinal, had to go along as a good soldier. The official presentation of the ritual — a document almost certainly approved by Ratzinger — tried to play it both ways: "The confession of sins made by the Pope is addressed to God, who alone can forgive sins, but it is also made before men, from whom the responsibilities of Christians cannot be hidden." So far, so penitential. But Benedict's latest words during the trip to Fatima seem to hedge how far he is willing to expose the institution he runs to liability: he assigned wrongdoing not to the church but to its servants.

It's a critical point. The consequences of sin are subject to divine salvation, but the consequences of crime lie within the purview of human judges and entail courts of law, prison, public humiliation and the loss of property. That may not matter when the crimes are deep in the past and the victims dead. But the current pedophilia scandal involves people who are still living — and who are demanding redress. "For a church that is famous for moving slowly, they've been moving pretty fast lately," says McDaid, the abuse victim from Massachusetts. But, he says, that's because "these people are in fear. They should be in fear. This isn't going to go away just with words." What words might Benedict say next? Several well-placed Vatican officials have floated the idea that the Pope may deliver a mea culpa at a convention that starts on June 9 in Rome, marking the end of the church's Year of the Priest. "Expectations are again building up for the Pope to say something that will somehow resolve everything," says a Vatican source. But the Pope seems to have no such plan in mind. "It has backed him into a corner," says the source, speaking of the speculation that a mea culpa is coming. "It is clear that people at the Vatican are not singing from the same hymnbook." And there's a problem with the occasion too. "Tens of thousands of good, holy priests who are trying to do their best are coming to Rome," says the source. "If the message is about sex abuse, it's like saying, In the end, this is your fault. If he wants to bring together the bishops of the world for a mea culpa, that might make more sense."

As for challenging the Curia, a Benedict loyalist in the Vatican doubts that the aging Pope can take on the established powers of the church at this stage of his papacy. Moreover, to seek accountability for the culture of cover-up means undermining the legacy of his great friend and hero John Paul II, under whose watch much of the crisis occurred and whose papacy quite consciously chose to ignore the clamor of abuse victims until it exploded into a public scandal in 2002. The Polish Pontiff is on the fast track to sainthood. Says a Vatican insider: "When John Paul II is canonized, it will be despite his abysmal record as administrator of the church."

Even if Benedict forces the Curia to be more forthcoming, he will not have caught up with many believers. Though their church is still run top-down, Catholics now carry the expectations of a kind of faithful citizenry rather than an obedient flock. Plans are afoot for thousands of abuse victims and their loved ones to travel to Rome in October for a "Reformation Day" to pressure the Vatican to act. McDaid, who met Benedict in Washington in 2008, is one of the prime organizers of the march on St. Peter's, and he envisions a massive democracy movement to transform Rome. "It's the people's church," he says. "We have to take it back." McDaid talks about priests and nuns who are raising travel money for "victims who can't rub two nickels together to get to Rome. This is way bigger than [Martin Luther's] Reformation."

Reforming the Church

The word *reformation* is a sensitive one for Catholics, raising the specter of one of the church's great historical challenges. But it has faced down danger before. Ratzinger once cited the legendary Cardinal- diplomat Ercole Consalvi, who, when told

that Napoleon was out to destroy the Catholic Church, exclaimed, "He will never succeed. We have not managed to do it ourselves." This crisis may yet be the catalyst for change.

Can the church really change? Father Thomas Whelan, a professor of theology at Dublin's Milltown Institute, points out that "this very centralized church [tightly managed out of Rome] has only really been the case since the end of the 19th century." Now the pedophile-priest scandal has struck a massive blow against ecclesiastical autocracy. If the church doesn't clean house, the consequences will be dire. The scandals in deeply Catholic Ireland have led to a massive emptying of churches. Controversies in Germany, Austria and other parts of Europe have had a similar effect. "This memory [of sexual abuse] will now be forever encased in history," says Whelan. "In Ireland, at least, theology can't ever be the same without mentioning it — not just the abuse but how it was handled by the church."

For some liberals, the crisis over sex abuse is a chance to argue old questions of dogma and discipline once again: for example, to address the necessity of celibacy in the priesthood and the church's vision of sex, to expand the role of women and to define the status of Catholic homosexuals. Others say the authority of the bishops — and the Pope — must now be shared with the faithful. Conservatives, for their part, see this crisis as an opportunity to double down on their criticism of the sexual profligacy of modern culture and re-emphasize the core of what they believe are the traditional and biblical essentials of Catholicism, even if that means ejecting and rejecting fellow Catholics who can no longer subject themselves to full obedience to the teachings of the church and its fathers. Increasingly, those conservative Catholics are found outside the church's traditional home in Europe, among Africans, Asians and Latin Americans who are proud to be embraced by a 2,000-year-old institution. That shift in the core of the faithful — even without any ideological change — will bring about a metamorphosis in the Roman nature of the Catholic Church.

One vision for the future echoes from the past. A conservative website is circulating a prophecy uttered by a 42-year-old Catholic theologian in 1969, amid the turmoil of that year of radicalism and barricades. The priest envisioned a post-imperial papacy, shorn of wealth and pretenses of earthly power. "From today's crisis, a church will emerge tomorrow that will have lost a great deal," he said on German radio. "She will be small and, to a large extent, will have to start from the beginning. She will no longer be able to fill many of the buildings created in her period of great splendor. Because of the smaller number of her followers, she will lose many of her privileges in society. Contrary to what has happened until now, she will present herself much more as a community of volunteers ... As a small community, she will demand much more from the initiative of each of her members and she will certainly also acknowledge new forms of ministry and will raise up to the priesthood proven Christians who have other jobs ... It will make her poor and a church of the little people ... All this will require time. The process will be slow and painful." The theologian was Joseph Ratzinger. And his vision from 40 years ago may now unfold in ways he could never have imagined. (Howard Chua-Eoan and Jeff Israely, *Time*, Thur., May 27, 2010)

Saudi Arabia Reportedly Deports Men for Being 'Too Handsome'

It's a good problem to have, but it's still a problem for three men who have reportedly been deported from Saudi Arabia for being "too handsome." The men were visiting Saudi Arabia from the United Arab Emirates to attend the annual Jenadrivah Heritage & Cultural Festival in Riyadh. They were apparently minding their own business when members of Saudi Arabia's religious police entered the pavilion and forcibly removed them from the festival. Their offense? They were considered "too handsome" to stay for fear that women would find them irresistible, according to the Arabic-language newspaper *Elaph*.

"A festival official said the three Emiratis were taken out on the grounds they are too handsome and that the Commission [for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice] members feared female visitors could fall for them," *Elaph* reported this week, as quoted on the website Arabian Business. The Emirati men were subsequently deported to Abu Dhabi. In Saudi Arabia women are largely prohibited from interacting with unrelated males.

After the incident, the U.A.E. released an official statement indicating that the religious police may have been on high alert because of the unplanned (and, we assume, unnerving) presence of an unnamed female artist. It's unclear whether the men were evicted in relation to that incident. (Melissa Locker, *Time*, April 17, 2013)

Israel to outlaw gender inequality

Israeli Attorney-General Yehuda Weinstein has advised all government ministers to immediately end gender segregation in public spaces, issuing guidelines that would change many aspects of life, from buses to burials, healthcare to radio airwaves. Mr Weinstein called on public agencies "to act fast, efficiently and decisively", saying "behaviour aimed at preventing women from receiving public services with equal conditions" should be subject to criminal prosecution. While the advisory itself is not binding, regulations and legislation are widely expected in the coming weeks, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed general opposition to segregation.

Legal battles over the treatment of women in Israel's public sphere have contributed to mounting tension for several years, particularly over a requirement that women sit in the back on bus routes through ultra-Orthodox neighbourhoods. It is part of a larger struggle over identity between the growing ultra-Orthodox minority and the rest of Israel, as Mr Netanyahu's new government moves to end widespread exemptions from the army for yeshiva students; integrate them into the workforce; cut back subsidies on which their large families rely; and overhaul the curriculum in their schools.

"It's a very important message saying we will not let religious extremism take over," said Ronit Hed, director of Shatil, a coalition of groups that fights segregation. "Once the religious law takes over the democracy, that's where we're in danger." Mr Weinstein's statement said all seats on all buses must be open to everyone; that women must be allowed to deliver eulogies; that seating at public ceremonies must be mixed; and that signs advising women to dress modestly cannot be posted on streets. Yedidia Stern, vice-president of the Israel Democracy Institute, said most Israelis would welcome the changes, and that ultra-Orthodox politicians, who were shut out of Netanyahu's coalition government, had little chance of stopping them.

But Mr Stern worried that the new rules could fuel the flames. "From their point of view, this is a huge attack against their style of life." (Jodi Rudoren, *New York Times/SMH*, May 10, 2013)