

The credit trap

Easy money has
its risks



Astrology:

Fad, fact, or fraud?

Being born again

What it really involves

The occult and psychic phenomena

A true story of one encounter



My Journey Into the Occult

MY NEAR DOWNFALL was launched by a book in a bright yellow jacket—a book seemingly with a will of its own.

There it was, crowded on the "New Arrivals" shelf of the town's small branch library, demanding my notice. In what I now truly believe was a remarkable demonstration of matter

over mind, this slim volume seemed to give off a special glow, and I could almost hear an urgent, "Take me. Take me."

At the checkout desk the little old librarian looked

piercingly at me. "You too?" she said. Handing me the book on the occult, she added, "Don't say I didn't warn you."

"I'll remember," I laughed. But now I'm not laughing any more.

Of course, I had heard of the sensational *Rosemary's Baby* and the even more sensational *The Exorcist*, but my disinterest was so great it never occurred to me to read the books, much less see the films.

Black magic, voodooism, Satanism, and other dark "isms" existed, but completely outside my sphere. The very thought of such mysterious evils involving unspeakable practices

Margaret Chenoweth is a pen name. The experience is true. © 1978 by author.

triggered in me instant recoil. Clairvoyants, mediums, Gypsy fortune-tellers, palmists, together with Ouija boards and such, I dismissed as lesser evils providing harmless (or so I once thought) pastimes for the gullible.

ESP was quite another thing. So many authenticated, even dramatic,

I was hooked. How delightful, I thought, to have at this late date discovered such a fascinating new interest. That the "interest" discovered me I did not suspect until much later when it was almost too late. Now, as then, I still consider myself the most unlikely candidate ever to be singled

out for corruption.

A born skeptic, I nevertheless yielded to the fascination of the, to me, new subject and subsequently raced through dozens of books on the occult

Tall and slender, Myrna possessed an eloquent face silhouetted by lustrous black hair. Bare sandaled feet peeked out beneath her floor-length white tunic. How, I wondered, could such a beautiful woman ever be a handmaiden of anything evil?

by Margaret Chenoweth

instances in my family, especially between my son and me, made Extra Sensory Perception a commonplace fact of life.

How then did I, complacent in my middle-of-the-road opinions and viewpoints, mother of grown children, become involved in a hideous and terrifying occult experience from which I escaped only by sheer will and desperate prayer? It all began with that book.

With a tingle of anticipation I opened the book in the bright yellow jacket and with the first page was plunged headlong into another world, another dimension. It was like discovering electricity with all the accompanying shocks.

and related matters. Accounts of true psychic experiences, faith healings, precognition, reincarnation, séances, ectoplasm, spirit writings, voices from the dead, ghosts friendly and unfriendly, witches good and bad, and other supernatural beings and doings made very good reading but left me unconvinced. My Sunday School teacher back in Kansas had not called me Doubting Thomas for nothing.

Then I met Louise. Although until the moment of introduction we never had seen each other, it was like a reunion, old friends together again at last. This recognition she repeatedly confirmed by saying, "We must have been sisters in a former life," or "I place us in a



What harm could come from my investigation of the occult, from my fellowship with those who dabble in out-of-the-body experiences and other psychic phenomena?

mother-daughter situation in at least one existence. If not that, certainly a very warm and close relationship. Whatever, there is no question but that our lives have crossed in repeated reincarnations."

I neither accepted nor rejected that concept. Who knows? I thought. And why not? What harm could it do? How could I have known that with each lowering of the bars, I unwittingly opened the door a little wider on my own destruction?

Louise's enthusiastic firsthand accounts of out-of-body experiences on frequent astral flights, prenatal memories, absolute recall of many former existences, whetted my interest in the occult.

Then came the table-tipping episode.

That Louise, practiced in the art, actually could stage such a demonstration of mind over matter I could accept. But that I, on my first try, could duplicate the feat before a roomful of people really shook me. In turn, the others tried, but the table, largest of a nest of heavy end tables, remained firm on its four sturdy legs.

Urged on, once again I performed the feat. Following Louise's example, I placed my fingertips lightly on the thick tabletop. Closing my eyes, I concentrated with an intensity I didn't know I was capable of, commanding silently, "Move, move, up, up. . ."

A flow of energy from my fingertips seemed to penetrate the smooth wood surface, and I felt one with it. Then it happened. Slowly but surely the two front legs of the table began to lift, tilting the table backward as they cleared the floor.

Incredulous cries of "I don't believe it," "She did it again," "It's really lifting," shattered my concentration. I removed my fingers, and the table settled back on the floor with a rocking motion.

Opening my eyes, I saw Louise

watching me with a steady, speculative gaze.

Soon she invited me to a meeting.

"It's a loosely organized group," she informed me. "We have several women with this similar interest who meet informally to share ideas and experiences."

On the way Louise sketched in our hostess' background—a former actress who gave up a career in the theater to join the _____ Cult and lived as a nun for several years studying with "The Master." She later married a wealthy retired man who shared her deep interest in the occult.

While the house was merely interesting, Myrna (the owner) was sensational. Tall and slender, she had shining dark hair pulled tightly back to reveal the marvelous bone structure of her eloquent face and the flawless texture of her skin. I noted the enormity of her deepset gray eyes. Bare sandaled feet peeked out beneath the floor-length tunic of soft white fabric loosely gathered at her slender waist by a heavily jeweled belt. I found her handshake firm, her voice beautifully vibrant. "Welcome, Margaret dear. I'm delighted to have you join us. Louise has told us you are a true sensitive."

So it had a name. I was a sensitive.

She introduced me to the others in the oddly assorted group, though they showed no particular interest in me. Each seemed engrossed in a deep personal problem.

Louise motioned me to a seat beside her on an oversized white banquette, and the meeting began.

"I want to play for you the record my guru made especially for me," Myrna said reverently. As the sonorous, hypnotic voice of The Master rolled over us all, Myrna sank with a fluid motion to the floor. Gracefully and effortlessly she assumed the lotus position and softly began chanting her

mantra. Soon she appeared to be in a deep trance.

Finally the guru's voice ceased. A sudden hush settled over the room. Myrna gracefully came out of her trance. Then all eyes turned toward me. Clearly it was my turn. I obliged by relating a recurring dream I had been having.

"The dream, like all my dreams, is in technicolor. I seem to be floating as I exclaim at the unbelievable sight of a beautiful 360-degree rainbow. I marvel at the vast color wheel and invariably exclaim, 'I wish I'd brought my camera. No one ever will believe this.'"

There was a brief silence followed by animated, general interpretations of my dream.

"The rainbow is a good omen . . ."

"Yes, a soul at peace with itself . . ."

"Undoubtedly you are an old soul, have been here many times before . . ."

"You were on an astral journey, having a beautiful out-of-body experience."

Suddenly my hands were grasped by an intense youngish woman who turned them this way and that. She scrutinized each palm, measured my little fingers against my ring fingers, and said, "It's all here. Look." She raised my hands high. "See how her little fingers end well below the joint of her ring fingers."

The group seemed to accept this as factual proof of potential psychic powers.

Was it just coincidence that the vicar's sermon the next Sunday stressed the dangers of association with ungodly things in any form? In any case I listened but heard not, just as I had ignored the librarian's warning a few weeks before.

I decided to try meditation. I chose to picture a loved one standing in the center of a radiant white light, a method recommended in some book. It

A hideously evil presence invaded my room and sent chill after icy chill up and down my spine. It filled my nostrils with its stench and raised the hair on the back of my scalp.



was an exercise in futility. I kept having to force my wandering attention back into focus.

While I never achieved the special lighting effect, I might have become proficient had I not been turned off by a real, and to me, frightening experience. While I was testing my potential healing powers as described by some author, I became convinced I was out of my depth and should retreat while I still could. Get back to the safety of my lifetime habit of routine bedtime prayers and others as the occasion demanded.

The test first requires deep meditation, then afterward, while still relaxed, bringing the cupped fingers of the right hand into a proximity of six inches with the left open palm. If you are blessed with the gift of healing, a flow of electricity is supposed to jump the gap. I received a jolt so severe I actually felt a charge coming out of my elbows. Regardless of that painful reality, I did not then, nor do I now, believe that I am one of the anointed, blessed with healing powers beyond those inherent in us all.

In spite of the table lifting, the interpretations of the recurring dream, the insistence by the group that I indeed was a sensitive (don't forget the short little fingers), and finally passing the test for healing powers, I never believed for a moment that I was a psychic. Reason told me such powers, if they existed, would have manifested themselves long before. What I do believe is that my dabbling on the fringes of the occult was making me dangerously vulnerable to invasion, a conclusion reached after the fact.

Someone calling me. At the next, and for me the last, meeting everyone listened attentively as I told of being awakened abruptly on several successive nights by someone calling my name.

The first time it happened, I sat upright in bed. Startled, I puzzled for a minute, then ran down the hall to my

husband's room. His gentle, rhythmic snoring convinced me he had not called. Besides, I would have recognized his voice. In vain I tried to identify the voice that so distinctly called, "Margaret, Margaret. . . ." It was a seductive voice, neither male nor female, which trailed away on a caressing note, each time leaving me more disturbed.

Analyses of the nocturnal voice flew around the room.

"Someone from the other side is trying to reach you."

"Next time it happens just ask quietly, 'What do you want? What can I do for you?'"

These suggestions I found most unappealing. I feel there is no need to rush such confrontations on *this* side. I can wait.

Gradually I became aware that the worldwide interest in the occult had permeated the small town where I live, and the most unlikely persons were in some way delving into the subject.

The librarian whose warning I so airily ignored, a sober store owner, a teacher, the postmaster, a scout leader, several housewives, a few retirees—all for one reason or another were prying into the Great Unknown. Innocents all, down the rabbit hole.

Seized by a hideous presence.

Hopefully none of them ever will reap my harvest, an agonizing experience I dread to relate even now for fear the telling might summon back the evil force that tried to claim me one night.

I was literally jerked from a deep sleep by some one, some thing, which again called my name. Simultaneously an indescribable stench filled the room, and I was gripped with such terror as I never had known and hope never to feel again.

A hideously evil presence, impalpable but nonetheless real and horrible, was in the room, invading all the space. Instinctively I knew I was engaged in a struggle to save my very soul.

Chill after icy chill raced up and down my spine and lifted the hair on my scalp. Shaking, not from cold but from raw, undiluted fear, I met the onslaught with the only weapon I knew—prayer, desperate prayer.

"In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, leave me. I can do nothing for you," I repeated over and over. Without interrupting my frantic petition, I managed to turn on my bedside light, but that did not dispel the horror of the invisible, vile presence or lessen my terror.

The unimaginable foul odor enveloped me, permeated my being. The unholy, unseen presence pressed close, kept at bay only by my continuing jumbled prayer. "Our Father who art in heaven," with interposed commands of, "Leave me. Go. You cannot have me. I will never be yours."


How long this terrible struggle of wills continued, the fight for control of my being, I don't know. I did know it was a fight to the finish, a battle I had to win or be forever lost.

Now on my knees I implored, "Dear God, help me. Save me." Then finally, a sudden rush of fresh air swept out the dreadful stench, and with it the unspeakable evil force was gone as suddenly and inexplicably as it had come. Limp with joy at my salvation, drenched in perspiration from the conflict—the take-over of my soul by the evil spirit, devil, whatever—I thanked God for my deliverance.

The next day was one for burning.

Resolutely I gathered up my now sizable paperback library of titles pertaining to the occult and one by one consigned them to the flames in my outdoor trash burner.

The blaze rose to such a height and intensity I called to my husband for help in controlling it. Applying a stream of chemicals from a fire extinguisher, he said, "You called me just in time. This thing might have gotten out of hand."

"It *did* get out of hand," I said. 

Theologian says Bible teaches female equal to male

BELIEF in man's superiority over woman was only a tradition of Bible times, not a Biblical teaching itself, a theologian declared at a national seminar sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. Paul K. Jewett, professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, rejected the traditional, hierarchical view of man over woman in favor of "the complementarity of the sexes as equal under God."

"The Old Testament world was a man's world. A daughter remained under the authority of her father until she came under the authority of her husband, and then she became his purchased possession," Jewett said. The patriarchal, or father-dominated, assumption reflected Bible times, he said. "To appeal to the divine right of man over woman is like appealing to a divine right of a king over his subjects."

The Presbyterian theologian carefully documented his statements with frequent references to Scripture. He noted that women were seen as subordinated to men because of the story of woman being created out of man. "The man is said to have been formed out of the ground (Genesis 2:7), but no one would suppose he is subordinated to the ground because he was taken from it," he explained.

Jewett appealed to the life and teachings of Christ as a model for Christian relationship between the sexes. Christ's relationship to woman, considering the times, was "positively revolutionary," he said. "He treated women as fully human, equal to men in every respect."

Athlete rejects \$400,000 bid, stays with Campus Crusade

Ralph Drollinger is seven feet two and a quarter inches tall and weighs 235 pounds. He's a basketball-playing missionary who'd rather play for seventy-five hundred dollars a year than four hundred thousand dollars a year. That's right.

The 23-year-old UCLA graduate told the New York Nets professional basketball team to keep their four hundred thousand dollars; he'd rather stick with Athletes in Action, a Campus Crusade-sponsored team that devotes much of its

time to bringing young people to Christ.

Drollinger told a press conference that he turned down the offer by the Nets because he believes Athletes in Action is where he can "best invest" his life to telling others about God.

Christian television distracts believers from the local church

Christian television is hurting the local church, claims University of Chicago church historian Martin Marty in *Missouri in Perspective* (March), published by Evangelical Lutherans in Mission, the group which broke from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

"The electronic church," says Marty, "in the name of 'the old-time religion,' is ultramodern in style in that it satisfies people religiously *apart* from the disciplined, pastored life of the church."

"Even when the electronic church tries to convert for the local church, it is largely unsuccessful. The evangelicals are finding that all the people who claimed they found Jesus through the biggest media-based campaign that did use the churches, only three in one hundred ever signed up in a local congregation."

To the near exclusion of live, personal interaction with other believers, too many Christians, illustrates Marty, "get their jollies from the ruffled-shirt, pink-tuxedo man and the high-coiffured, low-necked women who talk about themselves under the guise of born-again autobiographies. Sunday morning the watchers get their jollies as Holy Ghost entertainers caress microphones among spurting fountains and a highly professional charismatic (in two senses) leader entertains them."

"Are they to turn off that very set and then make their way down the block to a congregation of real believers, sinners, off-key choirs, sweaty and homely people who need them, people they do not like but are supposed to love, ordinary pastors who preach grace along with calls to discipleship, pleas for stewardship that do not come well oiled?"

"The successful promoters have now institutionalized themselves so successfully—and their stocks are bullish—that in days of inflation they have to grab the

dollar the offering plate used to get, and in days of sensation, they have to put on ever more extravagant shows, each of them further than were their predecessors from spelling out the true cost of discipleship."

Private schools in America estimated to number 18,000

There were an estimated 4.8 million students in 17,950 nonpublic elementary and secondary schools in the United States during 1976-77 school year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Accounting for 9.8 percent of estimated 49 million pupils in nation's schools, private schools were found to be overwhelmingly religiously affiliated or oriented. Three fourths of private school students were enrolled in Roman Catholic schools. Other percentages of private school enrollment: Baptist, 2.1 percent; Calvinist, 1.1 percent; Episcopal, 1.7 percent; Jewish, 1.4 percent; Lutheran, 4.8 percent; Seventh-day Adventist, 1.1 percent.

New TV series on world's religions scheduled for September

"The Long Search," a thirteen-week television series that examines at close range the world's great religions and man's search for a god, will be presented nationally on Public Broadcasting Service stations beginning in September. A co-production of the British Broadcasting Corporation and Time-Life Films, the series will be underwritten by a grant from Xerox Corporation.

In the tradition of Kenneth Clark's "Civilisation" and Alistair Cooke's "America," "The Long Search" probes the religious needs and experiences of people in today's world.

The series not only examines religious pomp, tradition, and ceremonies but seeks to discover the relationship of religious experience to modern culture and society. It is also designed to contribute to understanding among peoples and different ways of life.

Many Protestant bodies face an oversupply of clergy

Many Protestant denominations are facing a severe oversupply of clergy.

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Legalized gambling is debated

This vintage poster depicts gambling as an evil that reaches its tentacles into every aspect of community life.

The growing nationwide trend toward legalized gambling is loudly trumpeted by various state governments as a means to raise revenues for education, welfare, property-tax relief, law enforcement, and a multitude of other purposes.

Strong opposition has come from many major Protestant churches, some Roman Catholic leaders and Jewish groups, who claim that gambling is immoral—often leading to personal misery and widespread social problems.

Within fifty years or so, several churches may have as many pastors as they do members, according to a Lilly Endowment funded study of twelve denominations.

The problem is most acute in the Episcopal Church, where, if current trends of clergy supply and membership decline continue, there will be one Episcopal priest for every lay member by the year

2000. The problem is not limited to mainline, liberal denominations. The job market is tightening noticeably even in growing churches like the Southern Baptist Convention.

Paradoxically, most churches, despite an oversupply of ministers, have many vacant parishes that are difficult to fill. These are usually small, rural churches. One of the few optimistic notes struck by the study is that church membership declines of the past decade have "bottomed out."

Commitment is real issue

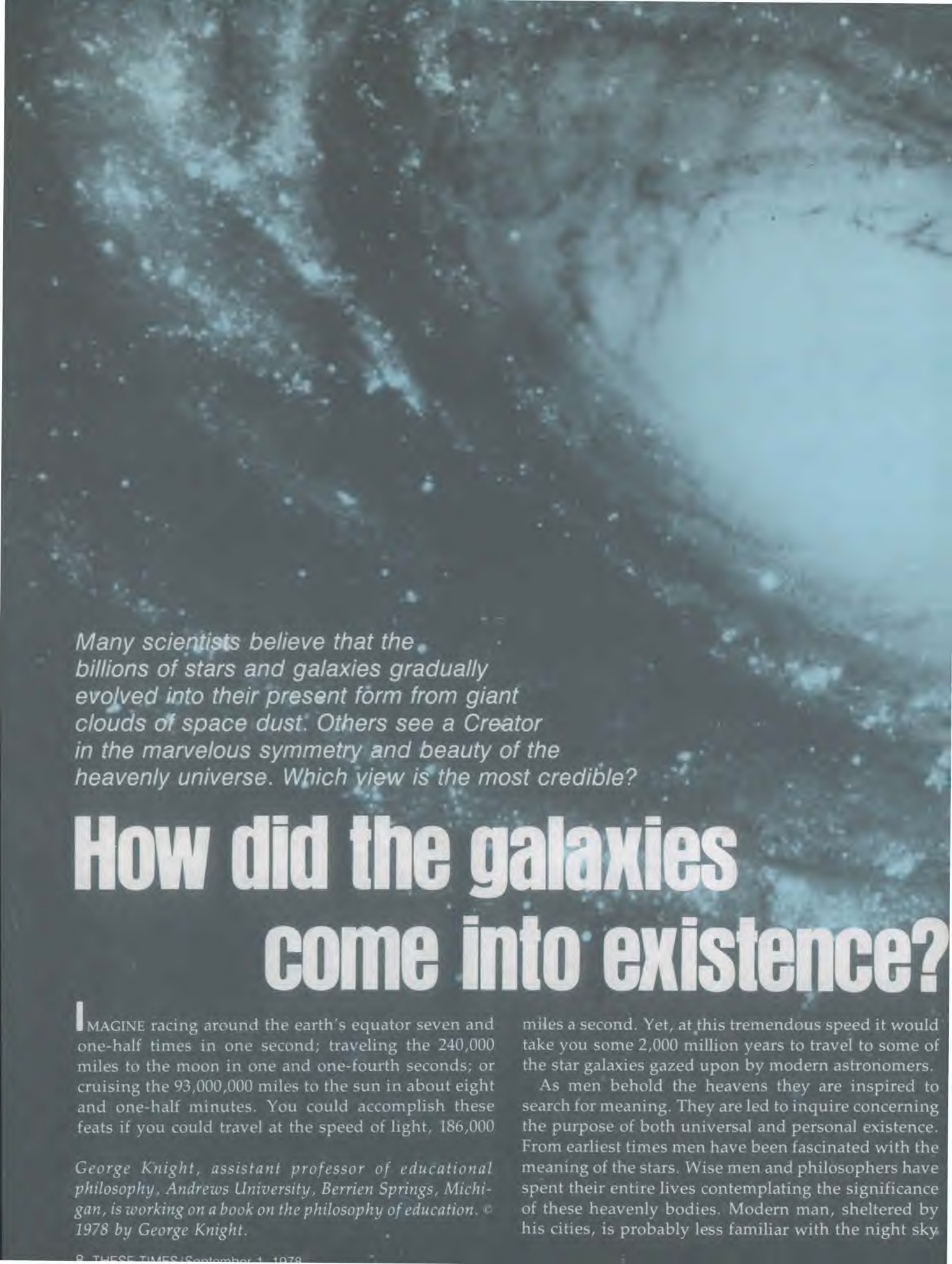
In light of the state of many marriages today, what can a pastor say to a young couple who want to live together?

Michael Zadig, writing out of his own experience of living with a girl, claims in the March *His* that commitment is the issue. "You can't say to someone, 'I love you. Let's live together to see what happens.' On those terms, either of you can split at a moment's notice. As a result you never really can be yourself or feel free to disagree without fear of losing the other person. You can never have the liberty to share your deepest feelings. You have to hold back. The relationship doesn't get a chance to grow because it is based on a conditional acceptance which is the cover for the self-gratification of two people indulging themselves in what they politely term a meaningful relationship.

"Real commitment, on the other hand, says, 'I am willing to spend my life with you to see you grow.' 'For better or for worse,' some marriage vows still say. Others, like those once exchanged on the Rhoda show, say, 'For as long as we both shall love.' Look at what happened to Rhoda and Joe since they spoke those tentative words.

"Love may have some cold spots, and it alone will never be enough to hold two people together. It's commitment that carries them over difficult times. Commitment is what God intended between a man and a woman. That is why He set up marriage—to express a lifelong commitment."*

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Many scientists believe that the billions of stars and galaxies gradually evolved into their present form from giant clouds of space dust. Others see a Creator in the marvelous symmetry and beauty of the heavenly universe. Which view is the most credible?

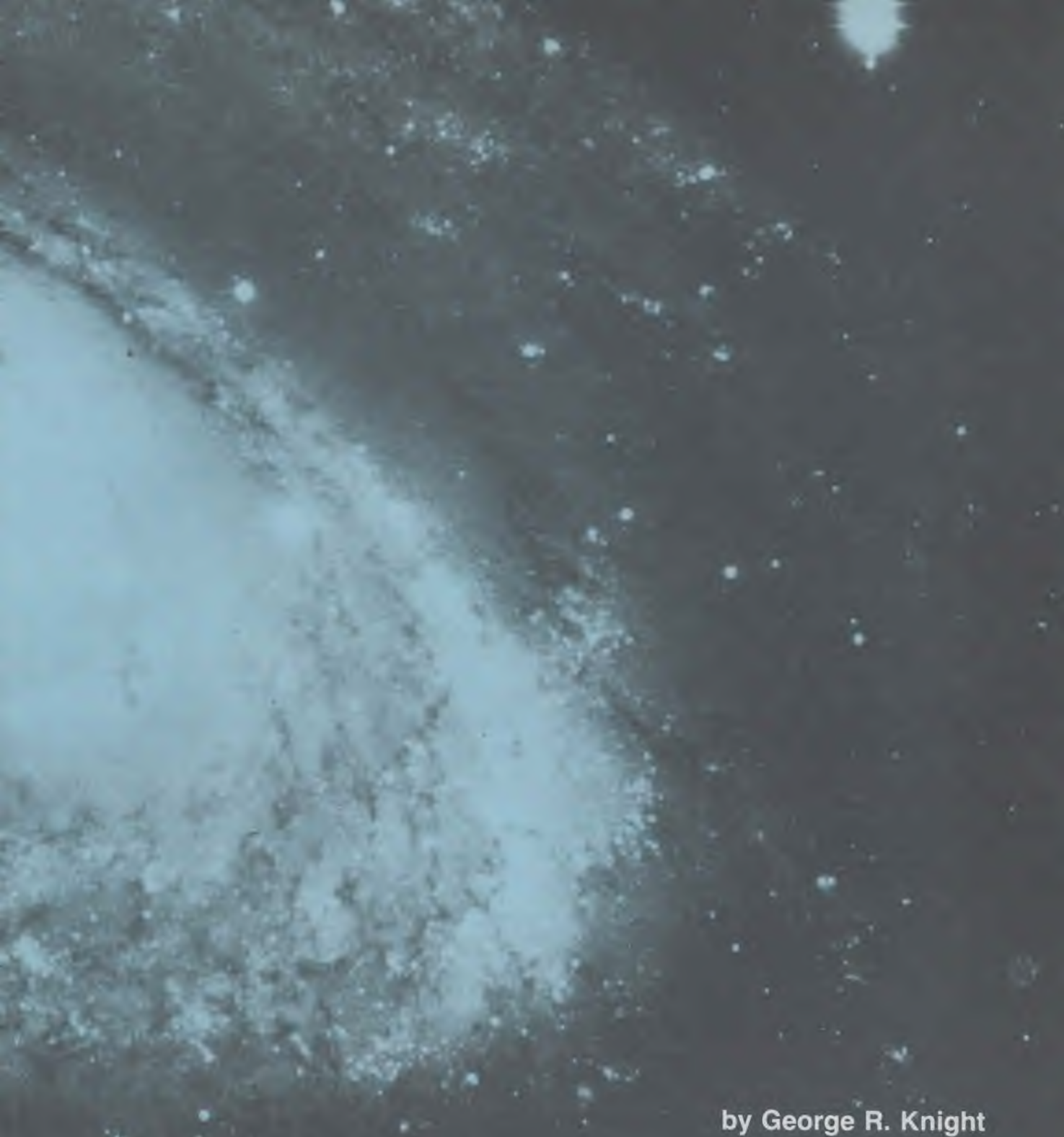
How did the galaxies come into existence?

IMAGINE racing around the earth's equator seven and one-half times in one second; traveling the 240,000 miles to the moon in one and one-fourth seconds; or cruising the 93,000,000 miles to the sun in about eight and one-half minutes. You could accomplish these feats if you could travel at the speed of light, 186,000

miles a second. Yet, at this tremendous speed it would take you some 2,000 million years to travel to some of the star galaxies gazed upon by modern astronomers.

As men behold the heavens they are inspired to search for meaning. They are led to inquire concerning the purpose of both universal and personal existence. From earliest times men have been fascinated with the meaning of the stars. Wise men and philosophers have spent their entire lives contemplating the significance of these heavenly bodies. Modern man, sheltered by his cities, is probably less familiar with the night sky

George Knight, assistant professor of educational philosophy, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, is working on a book on the philosophy of education. © 1978 by George Knight.



by George R. Knight

and other aspects of his natural world than were his ancestors. Yet I doubt whether even the most hard-bitten soul can look up at the sky on a clear, dark night without wondering where it all came from and what it all means.

The astronomers and astrologers of the ancient Near East had calculated that there were some 5,119 stars that could be seen with the naked eye. They were awed with their view of the heavens.

An incomprehensible universe. If the ancients were so

impressed with the visible heavens, we can only wonder how they would feel if they were alive in the twentieth century. Today we know that as we gaze upon the Milky Way we are beholding a cluster of over 100 billion stars or suns. The Milky Way galaxy is shaped like a giant disk, with our sun near one edge. To get some idea of the size of the Milky Way you can plan a trip through its center. At the speed of light, 670 million miles an hour, it would take 30,000 years to make the trip. By this comparison you can begin to grasp the vastness of our galaxy. Yet this is just the beginning of



“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:3, 4).

First, it all came about by chance—the universe just happened to come into existence and organization by accident after ceaseless ages of evolution. Or second, the existence of the universe points to a Creator who planned, designed, and made it. In other words, the very infinity of the heavens points to an infinite Creator-God.

1 Let us first look at the chance theory. The mathematical odds are against such a happening. This has been illustrated by Dr. A. Cressy Morrison, a former president of the New York Academy of Sciences, in his book entitled *Seven Reasons Why a Scientist Believes in God*. Dr. Morrison says, “Let me begin by supposing you mark ten pennies from one to ten, put them in your pocket, and give them a good shake. Now try to draw them out in sequence from one to ten, putting each coin back in your pocket after each draw and shuffling them all again.

“Mathematically, your chance of drawing number one first is one in ten; of drawing one and two in succession, one in one hundred; of drawing the first three numbers in succession, one in one thousand. The chance that you might draw all of them, from number one through number ten, in that order, would reach the unbelievable figure of one in 10 billion” (p. 12).

If the element of chance is this great for a problem with ten factors, you can begin to grasp the implications involved in the evolution of the universe or of even the simplest living organism, which, it should be noted, is infinitely more complex than the task of picking up ten coins in a certain order.

An interesting commonsense insight into the whole problem of the chance theory was made by the businessman

the universe. Astronomers now believe that there are at least one billion galaxies and that our Milky Way with its 100 billion flaming suns may be only medium-sized.

The size of the “known” universe is beyond the range of human imagination. We are faced with an apparent infinity in both time and space. But still man has not fathomed the extent of the universe. Newer techniques of investigation continue to push out the boundaries.

There is nothing more frustrating to the human mind than infinity—time and space without end. These are realities that the human mind cannot cope with or grasp. Our lives are finite, and we seek limitations and boundaries to such things as time and space without end. (An interesting line of thought leads one to wonder what would lie beyond the boundaries of space—except more space.) In universal terms, man is

but a speck on a speck (the earth) near a speck (the sun) in a speck (the Milky Way). Thinking men are faced with the problem of meaning for both their personal lives and the existence of the universe.

Not only are we faced with the problem of infinity in the largeness of the stellar universe, but we are also faced with infinity in the smallness and orderliness of atomic and molecular structure. For example, let us suppose that you filled a pint jar with air and that you were able to count the molecules of air as you let them escape out of the jar. If you let out 10,000,000 molecules each second, it would take you about 40,000,000 years to empty your jar of air.

How did it all begin? As you seek meaning in life, as you behold the infinity of the universe, you are faced with a basic question: Where did all this come from? You must choose one of two answers.

who said, "It takes a girl in our factory about two days to learn how to put the seventeen parts of a meat chopper together. It may be that these millions of worlds, each with its separate orbit, all balanced so wonderfully in space—it may be that they just happened; it may be that by a million years of tumbling about they finally arranged themselves. I don't know. I am merely a manufacturer of cutlery. But this I do know, that you can shake the seventeen parts of a meat chopper around in a washtub for the next 17 billion years, and you'll never have a meat chopper."

Even if a person is willing to believe in the odds of the accidental evolution of an infinite and orderly universe, he is still stuck with a bedrock question, Where did the raw material come from in the first place?

It is evident that it takes a great deal of faith to accept the chance theory, which is apparently built upon the belief that time, in itself, is a creative agent.

2 Now let us look at the **Creation theory**. It seems that a study of the heavens and the natural world has always tended to make believers out of men because here they come face-to-face with an infinity in time, space, and complexity that they can both see and demonstrate. The ancients had a saying, "The undevout astronomer is mad." Sir Isaac Newton, one of the world's greatest minds, said, "The universe



Astronomers believe the universe contains more than one billion galaxies.

exists, and by that one impossible fact declares itself a miracle, [and] postulates an infinite power."

It seems to be within the realm of my understanding (howbeit, fairly close to the edge) how some men of science might get involved in the evolution of

this earth and lose sight of all else. But when they turn their eyes heavenward, they are faced with an infinitely greater problem. It baffles my imagination how they can still hold faith in the chance theory, considering the infinity of the heavens. This very problem is one reason that I am a Christian today. For years I was an agnostic, but I could not get around the fact of orderliness and plan in both the universe and my personal body.

But, someone may ask, if the basic question underlying the chance theory relates to the origin of raw material, isn't there also a basic question that a sincere creationist must ask? There is—"Where did God come from?"

The Bible has an answer to this question—that God has always been and that He always will be—He is immortal. My first reaction to such an answer is that it sounds like double-talk. How can it be that He has no end and no beginning? You may be thinking, "I can't understand that answer." Well, I don't understand it either. But the important point is that neither can we understand the infinity in time, space, and complexity that we can experience and demonstrate in the universe around us.

We can't even answer the simple question of which way is up or down in relationship to the universe. How can we ever expect to understand the infinite majesty and power of the Creator? We understand very little of the creation, and one would expect the Creator to be more complex than His works. If we could comprehend the infinity of God, He would obviously not be big enough to be the Creator. God has not revealed many things to us because our minds could not comprehend them.

Details of Creation not provided. Our cramped little minds think in terms of distance and time rather than on the plane of the infinite and eternal. Due to this fact, the Bible makes no attempt to explain the creative process. Rather, it merely declares it to be an accomplished fact. The psalmist declares that "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made; . . . for he spake, and it was done" (Psalm 33:6, 9).

It should be noted that the orderliness of the universe does not "prove" the

God forgotten

It is plain that both the impotence of our generation and the weakness and secularization of our religion are born of an easy, vague, and undemanding theology. God has been made an affiliate. He is a member emeritus of society. We have made of Him a God who gives celestial sanction to our own prejudice and desires. The Holy One, in whose hands the nations are as a drop of water in the sea, we have forgotten. We have instead a hazy, humanized God whose activity is seen vaguely everywhere and clearly nowhere.

We have lost the God for whose glory we exist. We have lost the only reason for life in our failure to do His will. Macaulay said of the Puritans, "They feared nothing but God." Of our generation some historian may yet write, "They feared everything but God."

—Roy A. Burkhart.

existence of God. On the other hand, universal design certainly delivers a telling thrust in favor of His existence. Since limited humans would not be able to understand the proof, they must rely on faith in accepting the Creator-God. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Hebrews 11:3). Thus, all men live by faith. It remains for us to decide whether to focus this faith on design or accident.

Conclusion number one in our search for meaning is that an infinite and orderly universe postulates an infinite Creator—a Creator beyond our understanding, but One who has seen fit to reveal Himself to human minds in a way we can understand. The apostle Paul wrote, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power" (Hebrews 1:1-3, RSV). Jesus Christ is the fullness of the revelation of God.

A search for meaning, however, must go beyond a realization of the need for a Creator-God, because it is obvious to even a casual observer that there is a tension in nature. We see a beautiful creation, but it seems to be filled with deterioration, animosity, and killing. We are faced with the seemingly impossible problem of pain and death existing in the midst of an orderly creation.

Conclusion number two in our search for meaning is that there is a great controversy in nature between the powers of life, harmony, and happiness and the forces of death, discord, and misery.

A few years ago I was asked to visit a two-year-old child in the burn clinic of the John Sealy Hospital, Galveston, Texas. The sight I met has never been erased from my mind. This little child, who had never harmed anyone, had been severely burned and had no arms, eyelids, hair, ears, and lips. When I arrived, his mother was attempting to teach him to hold a spoon between his toes so that he could feed himself. Why



"The universe exists, and by that one impossible fact declares itself a miracle" (Isaac Newton).

do things like this happen? I asked myself. Why?

Physically we seem to be made wonderfully for life, but we are constantly beset by death. All men are faced with the terminal nature of this life—an ultimate reality from which they cannot escape.

Emotionally, also, we appear to be made for happiness, but we never seem to grasp it for very long. Gaining happiness and contentment is like eating cotton candy—just about the time you think you have a mouthful, it disappears. We seem to be made for peace and harmony, but we are surrounded by tension. We must seek a reasonable answer for this state of affairs.

Conclusion number three in our search for meaning leads us to realize that there are many things in our everyday world that are beyond our senses. We note that there are lights and colors that don't register on our eyes—that we see only a limited section of the spectrum of light. We accept the fact that we hear only certain types of sounds and that all our senses are limited. It comes as a startling surprise to realize that most of the reality of our world is beyond the grasp of our limited senses.


From this point it is not difficult to conceive of all sorts of things beyond our

senses—including supernatural beings whom, in our present state, we do not perceive. It is no longer difficult to accept the Biblical idea of angels—righteous and fallen—who have an existence and a reality of a higher order than our own. We see the results of their work in our daily life and in the world around us. Thus, we are beginning to perceive the reality of the participants of the "great controversy" on the sides of both life and happiness and death and misery.

Purpose for our existence. As we consider these ideas a fourth conclusion about meaning begins to come to the forefront of our thinking. It is evident that we are made for something better than an existence that terminates in pain, disease, and death. Our lives are wonderful complexities of mental, physical, and spiritual attributes. It is evident that we are made for life, even though the powers of evil and the forces of death constantly seek to deteriorate and to terminate our existence. Suddenly we realize the truth of the fact that the plan of salvation is as real as the mixed-up world in which we live.

We find that life is senseless when we are out of relationship with the Creator-God. We discover that universal existence and our personal life holds meaning only as we properly relate to the Creator. Furthermore, we come to note that we were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, 27), that man lost that image through sin (Genesis 3), and that God has a plan to restore His image in us through the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16; Colossians 3:10).

In our anguish, as we search for meaning, we observe the natural universe, and with David we ask, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:4). We rejoice in the answer that gives us the hope, meaning, and strength to believe and persevere. The reply is that the Creator-God is love (1 John 4:8) and that He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

We conclude our search with the revelation that personal meaning in an infinite universe is found only in our relationship to God through Jesus Christ. 

DICK JEWETT

Drugs: Telling it like it is

Due to the magnitude of the drug problem in America today, I want to share the following letter that I received recently from one teenage boy, whom I will call Rusty.

"DICK, sometimes I really worry about the world when my generation has to take over. Can you imagine a government of hopheads? surgeons who are stoned? You know it takes a lot of study to get to be a scientist. I don't know anybody who wants to study that hard for that long. Man, all anybody wants to do around here is to get off on some drug or another and fly as long as possible, then figure the quickest way to get high again.

"My folks moved out of San Francisco last year, and everybody said things would be better in the country. But it's worse! Most of the kids here have rich parents. So money is no problem. There are more drugs used and sold at school here than I ever saw in San Francisco. Some of the kids come to school just to make a connection.

"There are a few kids who don't use stuff, but they are the strange ones that the rest don't like. In order to get along and have any friends at all you have to at least smoke pot. I started when I was in grade school. Not much. Just experimenting now and then with the other

little kids who knew the score. It didn't seem to hurt anything. Now it's different. No matter what the question is, the answer is always to go get some junk or booze.

"We don't go out for sports. Hardly anybody bothers to have a party. There is nothing to do for fun except one thing. If somebody's parents are causing trouble, or somebody else just broke up with his girl friend, or everybody is just bored, somebody says, 'Let's get bombed,' and off we go. I don't even think we really care about each other that much. It is just an 'us against them' sort of thing that makes it so important to hang together.

"I know you want to ask me why I don't just quit. I have thought about it. But I don't have anyplace to go. Everybody I know and like does it. So I would be left out in the cold. I would be a nobody. The way it is now, I deal just enough to pay for my drugs. I get respect. And I'll tell you something. By now I really like to use the stuff. I don't think I could get off it if I tried. It is the only friend who never lets me down.

"I use different kinds of stuff, but it all comes out the same: No matter how I am feeling at the time, I always feel better after I get it into me. It is the only time I can relax and feel good. When I'm not on something, I keep worrying about things—like whether or not I am going to spend the rest of my life on this merry-go-round. Some people never get off. I know that. I know it could happen to me.

"I took a class in graphic arts last term. It was about the only class I managed to get to on a regular basis. But I really think I would like to become a top-notch graphic artist.

"Sometimes I think I am at a kind of crossroads. Drugs could really keep me from being a success. I use more now than I did. Every day. Most of the time I don't even go to school. The trouble is that more and more I find myself not caring about anything. I have no long-range goals or worries. And all the short-term problems can easily be solved in the same way.


"I do know something is happening

in my head. I can't remember things. It was the first time my mother has really noticed anything different about me. Yesterday she yelled at me for being so forgetful and then actually sat down with me and talked about what might be bothering me. I don't blame my parents. There is nothing in the world they can do about it. I have to go to school. And I have to play the game the way the game is played.

"I don't think parents have any idea how big the problem of drugs really is. They hear a little about it. But they don't know. They really don't know. My girl friend tried to tell her folks about it one time last year. They just laughed it off. They didn't mean to put her down. They just couldn't believe it—or wouldn't.

"Now I don't think I could quit if I wanted to. And I am pretty sure I don't want to. The way it gets worse is that everytime I am not on something I feel so bad about being on something all the time that I have to get something to make me feel better. Does that make any sense?

"I think I really want help. I want somebody to tell me everything is going to be all right, that I shouldn't worry. I worry a lot. I look at my parents, and I think I am old and they are young. They don't know, and I have to protect them from the truth. I think my parents would fall apart if they knew. My dad has a heart condition.

"All of us kids have one thing in common: We pretend everything is cool. Even to each other we just smile and keep on going on. It's not that I am addicted to drugs. I mix my medicine. I'm not hooked on anything specific. Except in my head. That's where the problem is. It is easy to get and easy to use. And I don't ever have to do anything hard anymore! I have a permanent pain killer. It is nice in a way. Nobody can make me feel bad or hurt me. I have my own way of kissing the hurt and making it go away. Now I don't need anyone. I have everything I need. . . .Rusty." 



Dick Jewett conducts a radio talk show and crisis-line service for troubled young people in the San Francisco peninsula area. Those wishing to submit problem situations for

possible inclusion in the pages of THESE TIMES or for a personal response please write to Dick Jewett, THESE TIMES, Box 59, Nashville, TN 37202.

Credit—too much, too easy to get,
and so tempting to use. Here
are some practical sugges-
tions for getting control of
your runaway budget.

The credit trap

How you
can get out
of debt

by Kimber J. Lantry

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THEY BOTH came from middle-class families, went to college, financed their education by a few grants, a little work, a little help from home, and, of course, a little debt—only about a thousand a year, though, and since the loans were federally guaranteed, the payments didn't start until a year after college.

After they were married, they both got good jobs, together making about \$16,000 annually. They rented a nice apartment, bought a new car (an economy model, with easy monthly payments), and the local department store had a great installment plan for the carpet, drapes, and some basic furniture. What's more, with their income, their local bank was happy to grant their application for a bank credit card. All things considered, as father-in-law put it, "You sure have it a lot better than we did twenty-five years ago."

But somehow they have never seen the rosy lining on their financial dream cloud—that \$16,000 a year income is actually about \$13,000 after federal, state, and Social Security taxes. The rent on their nice apartment uses up another \$3,000 a year. Since they both work, they eat at the local cafeteria and buy a lot of TV dinners to use when they both come home tired in the evenings, and their food bill comes close to \$2,000 a year, though they don't realize it. The car payments come to about \$1,500 a year, and insurance, gas, and other operating costs use up another thousand. Their educational debts are just beginning to come due, and the bank and the department store eat up just about all the remaining "disposable income."

They have been just getting by, but recently the car broke down, and they have had some unexpected medical expenses. The telephone company has taken their telephone away, the loan company is calling about the car payments, which are two months

Kimber Lantry is a treasury department employee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Washington, D.C. This article is courtesy of "Insight" magazine, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C. © 1978 by Kimber Lantry.

behind, and the department store has turned their accounts over to a collection agency, which is threatening to have their wages garnisheed. Neither of them has been able to afford any new clothes for more than a year. They fight constantly over money, and both are beginning to think of how good they had it when they were single.

Sound familiar? Change a few figures in the above scenario, and you could be reading a history of your own financial suffering. The disease is credit—too much, too easy to get, and so tempting to use. Where did they (and/or you) go wrong, and what can be done about it?

First, some definitions. Debt, credit, or financing are general terms for what is really the purchase of money. Lacking the necessary funds, you, in effect, go to a firm that "sells money." The cost of the money is the interest that you pay.

Over the years, this borrowing (or purchase) of money was generally frowned upon by the mores of society, but in the developed countries in the twentieth century, a middle-class life-style on a middle-class income virtually demands some debt, and it has come to be acceptable. Thus, a distinction should be made between wise and unwise debt. If a debt is incurred for a necessity, such as education or a home, or possibly a car to get to work, and if the means are readily available to repay the loan, it is very possible that going into debt might be the realistic course to follow.

But what if a series of reasonable, or more likely, a combination of reasonable and unreasonable borrowing has put you in debt, as it did the young couple in the above scenario? What can you do then?

How to get back on your feet. Family financial counselors recommend several steps. Some may not fit your case, while other recommendations will need to be tailored slightly. But in general, follow this plan:

1. **Tear up your credit cards**, charge cards, shopping plates, and even bank credit cards. Like an alcoholic throwing

away his bottle, you need to begin by removing the temptation.

2. **Make a list of all your income** (net, after-tax income, not gross income). Exclude all windfall items, such as tax refunds, overtime pay, et cetera, since you can't depend on windfalls. Then list all your regular expenses, such as tithe and offerings (no matter how deeply you are in debt, don't stop your giving—you're going to need the Lord's blessing as you get out of debt), rent, food, a regular amount for clothes, transportation, and the like. Then list all extraordinary items you know are coming, such as a new set of tires for the car, or a once-a-year insurance premium. Finally, list all your debts. Make a careful note of the monthly payments on each.

3. **Make and balance a budget.** Since most bills and expenses come monthly, it's probably a good idea to budget on a monthly basis. Be sure the whole family is involved, children (if they are old enough to understand) as well as spouse. Balancing your budget will probably involve some cuts that will affect your life-style, so as you do it, here are some sample questions to ask yourself:

a. Can the housing expenses be cut? Moving to cheaper, more reasonable housing may solve your problems. But, before you decide on this solution, consider the cost of moving, deposits on the rent, new carpets, drapes, and other relocation needs. Also consider the quality of the area that may be cheaper—will you risk paying the immeasurable human costs as a victim of crime?

b. Can transportation expenses be cut? If you have two cars, consider the effect of selling the second car. The extra inconvenience of only one car may be insignificant compared to the savings. Or, dare to ask yourself the unthinkable: can you get along without a car? It is possible, by moving to within walking distance of a store, utilizing car pools and/or public transportation, or possibly a bicycle, that you could ease a serious financial strain by doing without a car.

c. Can you cut your food bills? First, rule out categorically all expensive



How to control your finances

Here are 14 steps you can take right now to get out of debt and gain control of your finances.

1. CONSIDER THE BENEFITS OF BEING DEBT FREE.

- Reduce your expenses.
- Delight your creditors.
- Provide financial freedom.
- Please God.

2. SET A GOAL TO BE DEBT FREE.

- It's better to aim at something and miss it than to aim at nothing and hit it.
- No one gets out of debt by accident.

prepared foods. Then, investigate the comparative costs of different foods of equal nutrition. If you are seriously in debt, you could do well to eat very simply.

d. Can you cut your entertainment? A picnic in the park can cost a fraction of eating out, as can an evening of games at home, rather than commercial entertainment.

4. *Establish a record of spending.* After you have gone over all your expenses, cutting where possible, set up a record-keeping system, and stick to it firmly. It seems rather strange, but by forcing yourself to write down every expenditure, however small,

you'll spend less. You'll also know, month by month, whether you are sticking to your budget. As the saying goes, take care of the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves; or to put it in more modern, inflated terms, take care of the dollars, and the twenties will take care of themselves.

5. *Begin repayment.* Within the framework of your budget, devise a plan to pay back all bills. If at all possible, plan on making all payments on time—penalty charges and extra interest can add to portions of tardy payments. To use an extreme example, one family paid \$800 on numerous outstanding debts, far overdue, and

found they had actually paid only \$7 on the principal (Alice Lake, "How Families Are Getting Out of Debt," *McCall's*, May, 1975, p. 112). Be very careful about the temptation to get a single consolidation, or bill-paying loan. You can often end up with higher interest rates, and you almost certainly will pay more in the end; and because your payments will be spread out over a longer period of time, you will be tempted to incur additional debt.

Now convince your creditors to accept your plan. Remember, all your creditors want is their money. They have no desire to take you to court or make your life miserable by harassing you if they can be reasonably certain of

3. PLAN TO GIVE A PERCENTAGE OF EACH PAYCHECK TO GOD'S WORK.

- Learn now the joy of unselfish giving.
- Prove for yourself the words of the Bible, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
- Discover the truth of the promise of Jesus, "Give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:38).

4. LIST ALL YOU OWE. GET IT ALL DOWN—EVERYTHING!

- Loans
- Bills
- Amounts due friends and relatives
- Moral obligations
- Home mortgages

5. LIST ALL YOU OWN.

- Property such as your home
- Possessions such as cars, furniture, appliances
- Financial—bank accounts, savings, securities
- Life insurance cash values
- Present value of pension or profit-sharing plans
- Business interests

6. HAVE A SALE.

- Get rid of items you can live without, especially items on which you owe money.
- Most people have no idea of what they can do without until they try.
- Forget what may be lost on items you sell.
- Focus on the amount that can be applied to immediate debt reduction.
- Consider getting along with one less car. If you own two, get rid of one. If you own one, consider getting rid of it.

7. GET ON A CASH BASIS.

- Have a credit card cutting-up ceremony.
- Schedule a close-all-charge-accounts day.
- If you don't have the cash, don't buy.
- Follow the good advice in the Bible, "Make do with your pay" (Luke 3:14, NEB¹).
- Add no new debts. You can't borrow your way out of debt.

8. DECIDE ON A MONTHLY DEBT-PAYMENT AMOUNT.

- Squeeeeeeze as much as you can from your monthly budget.
- After the giving and taxes, pay your debts next.
- Scale your living down to make do with the money that is left.
- You can live on less than you think.
- Look around and see how many others live well on less than you have.
- Memorize and live by this:
Use it up,
Wear it out,
Make it do,
Do without!

9. FIND OUT HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE FOR YOU TO BE DEBT FREE.

- Divide the money you owe by the monthly amount of your debt payment.
- Answer = number of months to be debt free.

10. CHOP YOUR TIME GOAL IN HALF.

- That's right! Plan to be debt free twice as fast.
- Paying debt twice as fast does not double your payment.
 - To pay off \$5,000 in 2½ years increases your monthly payment from \$111.23 by \$82.52 to \$193.75.

12% Annual Interest Rate
Mo. Pay. based on years to pay off debt

Debt.	1yr.	2½ yrs.	5 yrs.
\$ 1,000	\$ 88.85	\$ 38.75	\$ 22.25
5,000	444.25	193.75	111.23
10,000	888.49	387.49	222.45

11. CREATE INCOME PROJECTS TO MATCH NEEDED DEBT PAYMENT.

- Convert some family time to work projects.
- Consider doing for others such things as house-cleaning, house sitting, pet care, plant care, child care, sewing, building, yard care, gift-making, gardening, tutoring, etc.
- Find family income projects. Note—8 hours of

work a week at minimum wage of \$2.65 will produce about \$90 per month (before taxes). 16 hours—\$180 to add to monthly debt payments.

- Worth it? You bet!

12. WRITE OUT A REPAYMENT SCHEDULE FOR EVERY CREDITOR.

- Divide amount you owe by No. of months of your project.
- Answer = monthly payment for each creditor.
- Develop a monthly pay-off schedule.
Amt. Due \$ _____
Mo. Pay. \$ _____ Date Paid _____
Bal. Due \$ _____

13. SEND YOUR REPAYMENT SCHEDULE TO EACH CREDITOR.

- Each creditor will be glad to see your plan.
- Invite him to tell you if plan is not satisfactory.
- Tell him you'll contact him if something happens to make you late or cause you to miss a payment.
- Profit from the Biblical promise, "Reliable communication permits progress" (Proverbs 13:17, TLB²).

14. STICK TO YOUR PLAN

- Beginning a job without finishing it simply amounts to wasting your time.
- Concentrate on the goal—to be debt free.
- Focus on the Biblical promise, "Desire accomplished is sweet to the soul" (Proverbs 13:19, Young).

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² The Living Bible, Paraphrased (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1971). Used by permission.

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being repaid in full eventually. Don't hesitate to bargain with them—a creditor will often accept partial payment now, with the prospect of full payment, rather than push you into bankruptcy.

6. *Finally, make the Lord your financial partner.* Though debt is not sin, avoiding it and getting out of it is very similar to overcoming sin, and your prospects for getting out of debt are certainly increased if you consult with the Lord as you allocate the income He gave you.

Still not enough? But what if, in spite of all your best efforts, you are in too

deep? There is still one other alternative—contact a debt-counseling service. A bank, finance company, social agency, or Better Business Bureau can recommend one. Or, you may write to the parent organization, the National Foundation for Consumer Credit, 1819 H Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Make sure the organization you turn to is nonprofit. You'll pay a small, virtually token, fee, generally two to ten dollars a month. In return, they will help you formulate and stick to a budget and work with your creditors to accept your repayment plan.

If at all possible don't consider bankruptcy. Though bankruptcy can

clear up your legal obligations to pay, there is a moral obligation, which is between you and your conscience. In addition, bankruptcy can be expensive because of legal costs, it doesn't always give you a completely clear start, it wipes out all possibility of future credit for long periods, and worst of all, it doesn't educate you to do better in the future.

Experience is a hard teacher, but it teaches its lessons well, and the experience of paying off your debts will teach you how to manage your money in the future. It may also save your marriage, your credit, and immeasurable amounts of financial anxiety.



What really happened to Al Johnson?



Al Johnson says he's been born again. His wife is guardedly appreciative; his children are mildly cynical; the guys at work think he's out of his mind. **by LaVonne Neff**

AL JOHNSON lived an uneventful life for forty years. He enjoyed watching televised sports, especially if he was surrounded by beer and potato chips; tinkering with his Fiat 850 Spider Coupe; dreaming of Farrah Fawcett-Majors. Once a week he went bowling with the boys. He loved his wife and their three children, although he didn't see much of them.

Suddenly Al Johnson got religion. He's given up weekend sports, what with church, Sunday School, and fellowship groups. He also says he's given up dreaming about sensuous women. He no longer bowls (he spends the time with his family). He's thinking about trading in his Fiat for a station wagon so he can take neighbor kids to Sunday School.

Al says he's been born again. He's walking on Cloud Nine. His wife is guardedly appreciative ("Will it last?"), his children are mildly cynical, the guys at work think he's out of his mind.

What really happened to Al Johnson? Al may indeed have been born again in the full Biblical sense of the term. A born-again person has a new spirit (Psalm 51:10), a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26), and a new mind (Romans 12:2); he is heading toward a new earth (Revelation 21:1). Born-again Charles Colson turned from running over his grandmother to evangelizing convicts. Born-again Eldridge Cleaver gave up life as a revolutionary in exile to stand trial for his crimes. Al Johnson's sudden change seems to fit the pattern.

Not all change is good. But here's where the problem comes in. Not all change is good. Some is downright unhealthy. While Al may be a truly born-again Christian, he may be suffering from profound psychological problems that can only complicate his life. And sometimes, at first, it's hard to tell the difference.

You're familiar with the term "repression." It's used to describe one way a

person may react to stress. Jane Owen's boss, for instance, gave her a piece of his mind on Monday. Jane's normal reaction would be a mixture of fear (she might lose her job) and hostility—and it would be the fault of her unreasonable, nit-picking, crabby old boss. But ask Jane on Wednesday how she and the boss get along, and she may tell you, "Pretty well, I guess."

Press her further. Ask her if the boss is ever unreasonably angry. Jane may stick to her story. "No, never any trouble. I mind my own business, and he minds his." Jane isn't lying. She honestly can't remember that the boss was furious just two days before. She has repressed the incident.

But you persist. "I don't know," you say. "I've heard he can get pretty nasty at times. Hasn't he ever . . . ?"

"Are you trying to stir up trouble?" Jane narrows her eyes and looks at you suspiciously. "I'll bet you're spying for the union or something. Mr. Smythe is an excellent, kind, understanding boss. You troublemakers had better leave him alone."

Jane is carrying her repression a step further. To hedge in the memory she doesn't want to admit, she's insisting that just the opposite is true. She won't tolerate any challenge to her "belief," either. Psychologists call her behavior *reaction formation*. One author describes it like this:

"Sometimes an individual protects himself from dangerous desires by not only repressing them, but actually developing conscious attitudes and behavior patterns that are just the opposite. Thus he may conceal hate with a facade of love, cruelty with kindness, or desires for sexual promiscuity with moralistic sexual attitudes and behavior. In this way the individual erects obstacles or barriers that reinforce his repression and keep his real desires and feelings from conscious awareness and from being carried out overtly" (James C. Coleman, *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, 5th edition, p. 126).

The trouble with repression-and-reaction formation is that they leave the original problem unsolved. The whole time Jane's praising her boss she is inwardly—unconsciously—suffering

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from his jabs. Before long she may suffer acute anxiety every time she rides a commuter train (it's taking her closer and closer to the boss). She may become obsessed with the goal of doing perfect work to the smallest detail (he wouldn't dare fire me then). She may develop bleeding ulcers (you don't have to go to work when you're sick in bed).

Now to get back to Al Johnson. He's changed a lot—no doubt about that. But has he really changed, inside and out, or is he just pretending—to himself as well as to his friends—to be a new man? Is he a born-again Christian or a crippled Christian, a victim of repression and reaction formation? What is a born-again Christian really like?

The born-again Christian builds his life on God, not on himself.

One kind of Christian cripple, for all his talk about God, still puts himself at the center of his universe. He renounces the secular pattern of the pursuit of happiness—the willingness to sacrifice all impediments, including other people, on the altar of self-actualization.

However, in his effort to be unselfish, this type of crippled Christian goes to the opposite extreme. He works only for the advancement of God's kingdom; he plays not at all; he sees social relationships merely as an opportunity for "witnessing." He becomes a milquetoast or a martyr in his eagerness to give up his own comfort for the sake of others. He is quite convinced that he is personally responsible for the coming of God's kingdom; he routinely searches his soul for any flaw that might prevent his being part of it.

A born-again Christian certainly deplores the popular secular selfishness of the seventies. He is willing, in love, to give up his personal rights when necessary. But a true born-again Christian trusts God to do His part too. He works for the Kingdom, but not frantically. His work does not become an end in itself.

He takes time to play, knowing that his body was made for fun as well as for work. He values other people because they also are made in God's image; while he loves to share his faith, he is not desperate to do so.

He recognizes that he cannot follow the secular attempt to put meaning into his own universe. He also recognizes that he cannot follow the Christian cripple's attempt to save himself. He spends

A true born-again Christian works for God, but not frantically. His work does not become an end in itself.

little time thinking about himself at all—he is much too busy thinking about his Creator and his fellow creatures.

The born-again Christian expects to begin his new life as a baby.

One kind of Christian cripple is happiest when singing hymns about "such a worm as I." He dislikes everything about himself—his gifts as well as his sins. If he is naturally interested in music, he decides that musicians are impractical; so he doggedly studies medicine instead. If he especially likes medicine, he switches to music so that he will not be in danger of becoming rich or proud. He comes to God hoping that Divinity will cancel his personality.

A born-again Christian certainly recognizes his sins. But without minimizing the corruption within him, he also recognizes his gifts—both the natural gifts he has enjoyed since birth and the spiritual gifts given to him at rebirth. Whatever his gift may be—playing the clarinet, comforting the bereaved, making money or chocolate-chip cookies—he dedicates it wholeheartedly to God. He is free to love himself because he knows that Jesus loves him, died for him, wants to live with him forever.

The born-again Christian doesn't crawl like a worm through the crack under the pearly gates, he walks confidently like the beloved, redeemed, infinitely valuable person he is.

The born-again Christian sees in himself the image of God.

One kind of Christian cripple expects instant perfection. Yesterday he was impatient, rude, disorganized, tense, and profane. Today he must be calm, polite, on schedule, relaxed, and pious. Maybe it will work—for a day or two. But if his about-face continues, Christian physician Paul Tournier would

worry. He writes, "A complete and lasting obliteration of reactions that are instinctive and natural to us must always give rise to the suspicion of an unconscious repression rather than the action of grace" (*The Meaning of Persons*, p. 220).

A born-again Christian certainly has new values; he is now trying to do God's will instead of his own. But as a new-born baby Christian, he still has his old habit patterns. If he once had a fierce temper, he will still fly off the handle. Except now he will humbly apologize to the one he hurts. Just as important, he will try to find out why he feels hostile inside, what it is that makes him so edgy. Then he will give his hostility to the Lord in prayer and to the brethren in confession. Eventually he and the Lord will conquer his evil temper. And then, no doubt, the Lord (or the brethren) will point out another habit pattern that desperately needs changing.

Not instant perfection but an exciting life of continual growth awaits the born-again Christian.

Then what about Al Johnson? Is he really a born-again Christian, or is some neurotic compulsion behind his behavior changes? In the long run it may not have to matter.

Maybe Al is overdoing it with the fellows at work. Maybe he is trying to earn points with God by giving up things he enjoys. That's not healthy adult behavior—but Al's still only a baby, remember.

Maybe Al thinks he's a nobody. Or maybe he's trying his best to swagger like the big guys when he's still just a few steps past crawling. Little kids are like that. And you say that Al thinks he has it all together when it's obvious to everyone else that he's in bad shape? Hard to live with, yes; but have you ever lived with a two-year-old?

There is one thing that will save a person like Al—born-again Christian big brothers and sisters. Al has a lot of those. Mature Christians who will recognize that he's a baby Christian, yet who will treat him like an adult. Who will stand by him when he falls without embarrassing him with unwanted help. Who will look for the beginnings of adult character traits and encourage them.

What really will happen to Al Johnson? The final answer isn't in. His story isn't finished yet. But the future looks bright.

JUNE STRONG

When the unexpected happens

I'VE COME to the conclusion that the password is *flexibility*.

Not long ago I was invited to speak at Sabbath services for a Christian boarding academy. The gentleman who issued the invitation cautioned me to be sure to arrive on Thursday evening, as he also wanted me to speak to his senior class early Friday morning.

Dutifully my husband, Don, and I set out on Thursday for our destination. After driving some hours through heavy fog and driving rain we arrived in the early evening on the designated campus, which was beautiful even in the drizzle.

After some inquiry we found we were to stay at the home of a young faculty member and his wife. We knocked upon their door with anticipation. It had been a gloomy journey, and we looked forward to warmth and companionship. When the door opened and we introduced ourselves, we knew by the looks of mingled horror and disbelief upon their faces that something was wrong.

"We didn't know you were coming tonight," they confessed honestly. "We were told you were coming for the weekend and interpreted that as a Friday night arrival."

"But come in," the young wife said, her face breaking into an amused grin. "It's not exactly how we planned it, but you're sure welcome."

And so we entered their tastefully decorated home. But our anticipation had wilted into embarrassment. It was an awkward situation.

"We were rushing frantically to complete the remodeling of our bathroom before you arrived," our hostess told us, motioning us to be seated in the living room, "but you're here; so the crisis is past and we can relax. Let's chat while I fold these diapers."

I realized her first moment of panic



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Photograph by T. N. King



had subsided, and she *really was* glad to see us. She made no apologies for the pile of clean laundry on the coffee table but simply went at the folding calmly as we talked.

When she completed her task, she excused herself to look in on their six-month-old baby and must have included a fast and efficient bed-change in the agenda, for when they led us to their own lovely bedroom later, everything was in readiness for our comfort.

The young husband did a hasty settling of the nearly completed bath, and by the time we went to bed it looked like something out of *Better Homes and Gardens*. Somehow through all this, there was never any sense of chaos. It was a delightful evening because one young woman possessed that marvelous ability to change plans, shift gears, adapt.

Sometimes a successful career wife is not flexible enough to move from the working world into the role of homemaker when her children arrive. She's forever looking wistfully back over her

shoulder toward paychecks and promotions, missing entirely the point of her new challenge.

Then there are middle-aged women who clutch pathetically at the last shreds of motherhood, failing to glimpse the exciting possibilities awaiting them in their remaining years.

Woman must ever be responsive to change . . .

when her husband's promotion demands a move across the country,

when her son announces he's going to marry a girl who's not her first choice,

when her daughter chooses hair-dressing instead of medicine for a career,

when her good little girl turns out to be the scamp of kindergarten,

when death leaves her alone, and she has never balanced a checkbook in her life.

These are the times to remember the password!



Astrology is a religion, and one of the oldest in the business. But how does it stand up under the close scrutiny of science and modern-day research techniques?

by William J. Petersen



ASTROLOGY FAD, FACT, OR FRAUD?

STRANGE TO SAY, the same year that astronauts took their first steps on the moon, astrology began hitting its stride on Main Street, America. That was 1969.

The rock musical *Hair* had been screaming, "This is the dawning of Aquarius," to crowded Broadway audiences for over a year. And all America seemed to have stars in its eyes.

No self-respecting newspaper in the country would think of hitting the streets without its daily horoscope from

Carroll Righter or Sydney Omar or Jeane Dixon. Even the smart women's magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *McCall's* were following suit.

Dell Publishing sold eight million of its *Horoscope Purse Books* that year; *A Gift of Prophecy*, about Jeane Dixon, had sold five million copies; and the 250 books on astrology in print included nifty titles such as *The Cat Horoscope* ("Is your cat a gourmet? . . . He's probably a Taurus") and *Astrology and Horse Racing*.

A New York brokerage house hired an astrologer; New York's Grand Central Station installed a computer to give folks their horoscopes in ten minutes for

\$2.50; and astrological dating services began cropping up all across the country.

There were reputedly 10,000 full-time astrologers and 175,000 more who moonlight at it, if you can use the phrase. (Incidentally, the largest Protestant denomination, the Southern Baptists, has about 40,000 ordained ministers.)

Astrology a religion. Well, if you thought the day of Aquarius that had dawned in the late 1960s would set slowly into the west in the early 1970s, you were dead wrong. Other fads have come and gone like that. Remember those Davy Crockett, Howdy Doody, and Zorro T-shirts?

William J. Petersen, editor of "Eternity Magazine," is author of "Those Curious New Cults," "Run Your Life by the Stars?" and "TM: A Do About Nothing?" © 1978 by William Petersen.



But obviously, astrology is more than a T-shirted fad.

It is a religion, one of the oldest in business. It may go back as far as the Tower of Babel in Genesis.

Certainly those Babylonian towers called ziggurats, which date to 3,000 years before Christ, were erected to survey the heavens. The Babylonian priests climbed those towers—which sat some 270 feet high on top of a series of seven terraces—in order to draw closer to the celestial heaven. As go-betweens for the king to the gods, the ancient priests would then survey the skies to discern the will of the deities.

Granted, that was a primitive form of astrology. However, the Babylonians

during the time of Daniel had perfected it further. Of course Daniel showed them up. Do you remember when he told the king, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery which the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries"?

But it was the Greeks (particularly a stargazer two centuries before Christ named Ptolemy) who made astrology what it is today. Incidentally, astrology is no more up to date than Ptolemy's astronomy, which believed that the earth was the scientific center of the universe.

Astrology has had its ups and downs in the past two thousand years, but in

the past four centuries it has been mostly downs.

Disillusioned with science. But in the late 1950s and early 1960s a disillusioned generation emerged in America. Having lost faith in science and psychology, young people no longer believed that all of man's problems could be solved by the application of scientific principles. They were turned off also by the organized church; it seemed more interested in building bigger buildings than in meeting people's needs. And seeking a non-Christian solution, they looked eastward and turned to Zen Buddhism, yoga, Krishna consciousness, and the occult.

"Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven" (Jeremiah 10:2).

Science rejects astrology

Disproved by research. Despite the protests of astrologers, scientific research is not in their corner. *Redbook* magazine told of a study of prominent scientists. The study concluded: "The birth dates of scientists are as random as the birth dates of the general population."

Scientists, and particularly astronomers, have long been unhappy about the claims of astrology. It claims to be scientific, but modern astrologers never even glance at the heavens. If they did, they would notice that their charts are not up to date.

Two thousand years ago, when Ptolemy codified astrology, it matched the sky, because Ptolemy was both an astronomer and an astrologer. But since that time, the heavens have gradually shifted. This is called the precession of the equinoxes. As a result the zodiac has moved one entire sign. One writer has said, "Although the old lodgers have moved, their names are still on the doors." This means that astrology may tell you if you were born in early October that you are a Libra. But the fact is—because of the precession of the equinoxes—that you are really a Virgo.

Denounced by science. Repeatedly, scientists have denounced astrology. In 1949 the prestigious American Astronomical Society declared, "Whatever hides behind the title of astrology . . . is nothing more than a mixture of superstition, duplicity, and business." And in 1975, 192 leading scientists, many of them Nobel prizewinners, signed a forthright declaration that "there is no scientific foundation" for astrology. "It is simply a mistake to imagine that the forces exerted by stars and planets at the moment of birth can in any way shape our futures. Neither is it true that the position of distant heavenly bodies makes certain days or periods more favorable to particular kinds of action, or that the sign under which one was born determines one's compatibility or incompatibility with other people."

For the Christian, however, the definitive word on astrology is not from science but from the Bible.

Many people, particularly adults, found it difficult to make the jump to the Eastern religions or the occult in one big leap. For them, astrology became a halfway house, a stepping-stone that could lead in either direction—to the occult or to Eastern religions.

And while most dabblers in astrology don't recognize that they are dwelling in a halfway house, astrology is invariably only partly satisfying. Many seek deeper involvement in a relatively short time.

What is astrology? Simply put, it is the study of the influence that stars and planets allegedly exert on people and things. And theoretically, astrologers base your horoscope on what the heavens looked like the exact moment you were born. One of astrology's prominent spokesmen, Llewellyn George, has said, "Certain vibrations inbreathed by a newly born babe endow the tendencies of character it will manifest."

So to get an accurate horoscope from a professional astrologer, you must know not only the date of your birth but also its precise moment and the latitude and longitude of your birthplace.

Astrology looks extremely scientific. You have to locate the planets in the ephemerides and calculate sidereal time. Great care is taken in drawing an accurate map of the heavens. The fact that the map has nothing to do with scientific reality is irrelevant.

But the key question is, Does it work?

Does it work? Well, yes and no. Some of it works just as *Poor Richard's Almanac* works. If your horoscope for the day tells you to "look before you leap," and you exercise a little extra caution, thereby saving yourself much distress, you tend to credit astrology. But, of course you could just as well have credited Ben Franklin, or King Solomon in the Book of Proverbs, where you will find similar advice.

Besides that, it is difficult to prove when it fails. *Time* magazine described it like this: "Break a leg when your astrologer told you the signs were good, and he can congratulate you on escaping what might have happened had the signs been bad. Conversely, if you go against the signs and nothing happens, the astrologer can insist that you were

Research disproves astrology

ACCORDING to astrology, Aries and Scorpio should be the signs under which military men are born. But an exhaustive test of 154,000 Marine reenlistments showed that Aries and Scorpio persons pursued military careers no more relentlessly than peace-loving Librans. Librans, according to astrology, should be musicians and painters. But another study of 2,000 artists disproved that idea also.

subconsciously careful because you were forewarned."

This makes it very difficult to convince a believer that astrology is a fake. After all, he knows it has worked in his own experience time and time again.

In *Astrology Disproved* Lawrence E. Jerome points out another reason why astrology seems to work. He says, "The structural setup of astrology itself insures that almost any chart, any set of interpretations, will fit almost all clients to at least a 50 percent accuracy." It doesn't really matter what sign you are born under; the chances are that some aspect of that sign will fit your personality. If by any chance it doesn't, then the astrologer can examine your moon sign or the other eight planetary influences. In your entire chart you would have nineteen or twenty separate horoscope elements, increasing the law of averages for a skillful astrologer.

What the Bible teaches. In Deuteronomy Moses warned against fortune-tellers and "observers of times, and . . . diviners." Jeremiah hit hard at astrology: "Do not learn the way of the nations nor be terrified by the signs of the heavens, because the nations are terrified by them. For the customs of the peoples are false" (10:2, 3, Berkeley*). Isaiah pokes fun at the astrologers—"each one wanders off in his own direction; not one will save you" (47:15, Berkeley). In fact, he says, "They shall not be able to save themselves" (verse 14).

And, of course, God used Daniel, who was surrounded by professional astrologers in Babylon, to demonstrate that trust in the Lord is of more benefit than faith in astrology.

While the New Testament doesn't mention the word *astrology*, the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles undercut it at every turn. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Do not be anxious about your life," and "do not be anxious about tomorrow." It's because of such anxiety and concern that astrology gets most of its converts.

When the storm suddenly came up on Galilee, the disciples were terrified, but Jesus rebuked the storm and then chided His disciples. They "marveled . . . that even winds and sea obey him." Jesus was teaching that nature was not in con-

Perplexing questions for astrologists

PEOPLE steeped in astrology seldom listen to scientists. But here are a few questions that challenge their thinking:

1. Why do only the constellations of the zodiac have an effect on man? There are some bigger stars and recently discovered planets. Why are these ignored?

2. What about Eskimos and Laplanders? They are born without a horoscope at times because no planet or sign of the zodiac is visible for several weeks each year. Does that mean they have no destiny?

3. Why are there so many astrologies? Not only do American astrologers differ on the advice they give, but Oriental astrology is totally different from the Western system. In other words, a New York astrologer might give you an entirely different reading from an astrologer in Bombay.

4. Then there's the question of twins. If they are born in the same place at the same time, they should have identical destinies. But the facts do not support this conclusion.

5. Why did astrologers decide that birth was more important than conception?

6. How do astrologers know which astral influences are good and which are bad? Why, for instance, is the quadratic relationship of Jupiter and Saturn bad but their trigon relationship good?

7. Why don't astrologers adjust their charts to harmonize with today's sky, which has shifted considerably from the sky of ancient times on which today's charts are based?


trol of God, but God controls nature. No matter what the horoscope of the disciples predicted for that day, the Son of God was in control. And the Son of God is in control of your little boat too.

When the apostle Paul set out on his missionary journeys to Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome, he invaded the hotbed of astrology. After he preached in Ephesus, "those who practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them." Ephesus was a center for astrology and the occult.

In Athens Paul revealed to the philosophers the identity of the unknown God, which is the same god that astrology worships. To the Romans, Paul painted the picture of man's downward slide until he worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator. And that, of course, is also a

characteristic of astrology.

To the Galatians and Colossians, Paul warns against becoming ensnared by the "rudiments of the world." Many New Testament scholars feel that this word may apply to the astrological symbols prevalent in the area. So Paul tells the Colossians that Christ is the head of every power and authority and indeed it is by Him that all things, including the stars and the planets, hang together.

For the Christian, therefore, to dabble in astrology is both dangerous and degrading. Why should a Christian be a slave to interpretations of God's creation when he can enjoy the privileges of being the son of the Creator? 

*From "The Modern Language Bible," The Berkeley Version, Copyright 1945, 1959, 1969, by Zondervan Publishing House, and is used by permission.

WHY SOME PRAYERS GO UNANSWERED

Prayer is not a celestial requisition form to be stamped "Approved" or "Forget it." God is an educator, not a vending machine. by Kit Watts

IF YOU LIVE with unanswered prayer, you are in good company. Unlike some current religious magazines, the Bible is filled with accounts of good people whose prayers were turned down.

Christians often overlook this fact. Instead, many rate their success as Christians by keeping a running score of prayers answered yes divided by the total number of prayers prayed. In this scheme, yes-answered-prayers are rather like spiritual home runs.

Unconsciously these Christians are

Kit Watts, minister of publications for the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, received her master of library science degree from the University of Maryland this year. © 1978 by Kit Watts.

subscribing to a syllogism that argues: "The . . . prayer of a righteous man availeth much." What I prayed for happened. Therefore I must be a righteous person." But deductive reasoning can trap you. If your prayers aren't getting yeses, you must logically conclude you are out of tune with God.

Another specious syllogism with an equally dangerous trap goes: "God answers prayer. What I prayed for happened. Therefore I have proved there is a God." Of course, if your prayer isn't answered, you are forced to say God doesn't exist.

The Bible doesn't support either of these syllogisms. Rather, it documents that how a prayer is answered doesn't necessarily prove anything about the

prayer itself, the one praying it, or God.

The Biblical hero Joseph, on a friendly errand of kindness, was beaten and sold to slavery. His terror and his pleas went unheeded by his brothers, and God did not deliver him. Neither did God protect him from unfair accusations by his master's wife, nor did He intervene to keep him out of jail. It was years and years before Joseph's life took a turn for the better and onlookers could see any credibility in his God.

The apostle Paul five times suffered thirty-nine lashes at the hands of enemies. He endured three beatings with rods, one stoning, three shipwrecks, a night and a day adrift at sea. In his own words he was "in



To God the Father
Date Tuesday Time 1:30

While you were out

Mr. ☒ Mrs./Miss Emily Anderson
of Springfield State Mo.

☒ Prayed ☐ Will call again ☐ Please return call

Message Emily requested the Holy Spirit to work in a special way on her son, Tim, who has wandered away from the Christian life and is caught up in drugs.

Prayer received by Jesus

danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, . . . danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure" (2 Corinthians 11, 26, 27, RSV).

And he never did persuade God to remove the "thorn in the flesh," believed by scholars to have been some ailment that reduced Paul's strength and effectiveness. Why didn't the prayers of this righteous man bring protection, deliverance, or healing?

The most poignant seemingly unanswered prayer is Jesus' own. "Father, . . . let this cup pass from me." It did not.

Good people can pray good prayers

that God will say no to. Your goodness has nothing to do with it.

But all this is still to make prayer a matter of statistics. And God is more given to living within the framework of principle than to turning things upside down to perform miracles. Prayer is not some celestial requisition form to be stamped "Approved" or "Forget it." God is an educator, not a vending machine.

Prayer is interaction; it is conversation. It is disclosing ourselves to Him without pretension or reserve. It's an honest pouring out of joys and sorrows, wants and desires. That's the way friends talk to each other.

We don't measure true friends by how rich they are and by how much or

how often they benefit us. We know them by how well they listen, how much they understand—and whether, after all that, they still love us.

Occasionally we have a friend who will go a step further. Even when he could save himself embarrassment or entanglement by disassociating himself from us, he chooses to stand at our side. He refuses to leave us alone to our tormentors or even to a deserved fate. He makes our plight his own. He suffers with us.

God is like that. He went in chains to Egypt with Joseph. He shared the blinding agony of Paul's lashings. It was He who struggled to Calvary under a cross and then died upon it.

God is greater than *yes* or *no* prayers. He is "with us."

The hoax of the mountain Methuselahs

FOR YEARS NOW we have heard fascinating reports of mountain folk living in the Andes, the Soviet Caucasus, and the Pakistani Kashmir who seemingly have discovered the secret of longevity—in some cases living close to double the threescore and ten familiar to most of the world's population.

A 1971 census of the Ecuadorian village of Vilcabamba, deep in the Andes, for example, listed 11.4 percent of the residents in the plus-sixty category (more than two and a half times the figure for other rural areas in Ecuador). The study also reported that nine of the 819 residents were one hundred or more years old, a remarkable figure for a community that size.

Scientists who have since flocked to these mountain retreats and have studied the life-style and diets of these modern Methuselahs—who give their ages as 109, 117, 128, 136, 143, and other similar figures—attribute their longevity to fresh mountain air, hard work, and a low-calorie, high-fiber diet.

Well, if the idea of hard work and a good diet doubling your life span sounded too good to be true, you're right. It's evidently not true after all. A detailed case by case analysis of these mountain Methuselahs reveals it was apparently all a big hoax.

Harvard professor of clinical medicine, Alexander Leaf—whose 1973 *National Geographic* article and book *Youth in Old Age* (1975) brought the Andes community into public limelight and launched the scientific research in that area—reported the hoax discovery to a National Institutes of Health workshop in Bethesda, Maryland, recently.

According to the latest findings, Vilcabamba ("Sacred Valley" in the Inca tongue) possesses the same percentage of oldsters and has them in the same age brackets as other Andean villages and towns. People do not live longer there than elsewhere in Ecuador.

Professor Leaf first became suspicious of a hoax when one man, who originally gave his age as 121, four years later told Leaf he was 132.

Two other researchers, anthropologist Sylvia Forman, of the University of Massachusetts, and physicist Richard

Mazess, of the University of Wisconsin, confirmed Leaf's suspicions when they examined baptismal and city records and discovered numerous discrepancies between the claimed ages of the senior citizens and the ages indicated by the records.

Finally they concluded that some of the town's oldest citizens simply lied about their ages, and scientists perpetuated those lies by believing their claims without verifying them.

In fact, Forman and Mazess say the records show that the oldest resident there is only 96—the village doesn't contain a single centenarian.

Professor Leaf believes the older Vilcabambans exaggerated their ages in order to draw scientists and tourists to their village—outsiders who would spend lots of money on food and native artifacts and boost the lagging economy of the isolated community.

Unfortunately it appears that the hoax of the Andean Methuselahs will go down on record alongside the earlier reports from Soviet scientists that some of their centenarians may not be as old as they claim either.

Maybe it's time man ceases his vain search for the elusive fountain of youth, whether it be in Ponçe de León's Florida or the scientists' mountain village high in the Andes, and returns to the true source of long life—God.

While it's true that a good diet combined with abstinence from tobacco and alcohol can increase a person's life span 5 to 10 percent (studies of Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists have proved that), the only way to live a long time—hundreds and thousands of years, in fact—is "to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7).—R.B.

A gambler's dream turns into a nightmare

Have you ever visited Las Vegas and watched gamblers perched in front of the one-arm bandits like so many crows on a telephone line? Hour after hour they feed their metallic pets, play the cards, and spin the wheels waiting for Lady Luck to tap them on the shoulder.

It makes one wonder how many of

them have heard about Gitti Millinaire, a 37-year-old Persian heiress who gambled away \$20 million in less than five years and recently filed for bankruptcy in a London court.

It seems Gitti had no problems with her inheritance over a ten-year period until one day in 1973 when she tried her hand at gambling—just to see what it was like.

And what began as an innocent lark quickly mushroomed into a monstrous obsession that imprisoned her in its grip. She visited the most famous casinos in London: the Playboy Club, the Victoria, the Clermont, and Ladbrokes. Her bets ran from as little as \$50 all the way to as much as \$200,000. She tried everything: blackjack, baccarat, chemin de fer.

Finally in desperation she begged the clubs not to give her credit beyond \$10,000, but they always gave in to her pleas to the contrary later in the evening.

When her \$20 million ran out she sold her Paris apartment for \$200,000 in a vain attempt to recoup some of her losses. She borrowed from her jet-set friends and signed tabs all over town.

"It was like a disease," she told the judge at her bankruptcy proceedings earlier this year. "I was ill, in pain. I was mad. I drank too much. I gambled too much. I lost everything."

"I borrowed two million dollars from a Persian boyfriend and lost it," she added. "I borrowed from friends, from fellow gamblers."

"One time I sent my husband home to get some more money that I had placed in our apartment safe. It was awful. He tried to stop me. But I just wouldn't listen."

Finally she admitted, "Now I've learned my lesson. I guess I'm what you would call penniless."

Twenty million dollars—a gambler's dream? Don't you believe it. Gambling is a nightmare—a nightmare for the individual entwined in the clutches of the compulsion, a nightmare for the wife or husband at home that must try to keep food on the table, and a nightmare for the children who must explain to their friends what's "wrong" with their daddy or mommy.—R.B.

Foot washing meant for Christians today?

SOMEONE IS anonymously sending THESE TIMES to me, and I almost always read every edition. I want to commend the stand you take in your publication for moral decency and especially for the article by Jean Hartley on "Mind Pollution—the Latest Environmental Threat," in the May, 1978, edition. The article was well written, very informative, interesting, and timely.

However, in the same edition, Patricia Maxwell's article, "Is Foot Washing Necessary?" is in error by stating that washing of feet was observed by early Christians as an act of worship. Unlike the Lord's Supper, the washing of feet was not instituted as worship, nor was it observed as such. Early Christians practiced washing feet as a home duty, a good work, along with rearing children, lodging strangers, and relieving the afflicted (1 Timothy 5:10). It was an act of service to man, not an act of worship to God.—S. G. Gray (evangelist, Central Church of Christ), Gadsden, Alabama.

Granted, the washing of dirty feet was a common activity familiar to all who tread the dusty roads of Palestine in Bible days. But just as Jesus took the unleavened bread and the grape juice of the familiar Jewish Passover service and transformed them into meaningful symbols for His followers in years to come, so He adapted a common household activity into a symbol of cleansing for the Lord's Supper.

You can see this in John 13. When Peter objected to the foot washing that Christ conducted (verses 6-9), Jesus replied, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Then in verses 12-15 He explained the meaning and importance of this new ordinance and indicated very plainly that His followers were to continue the rite ("If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet").

And to make His request more meaningful He added, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Does this sound like a common everyday household activity, or is it a specific rite equal in importance, and yes even a prerequisite, to the Lord's Supper? We think the latter fits the Bible account better.—Editors.

Cleaning up on television

This morning I saw your magazine for the first time, and I am most impressed with it. Every article is interesting, and most of the ones I've read are excellent for helping to improve one's life.

I would like to ask permission to use parts of the article on "Tele-Addiction" (April, 1978, issue) in some material our church is duplicating to give to our members to try to get them to speak out against bad television. I personally use the "off" switch to control bad television in my own home, but I need to do my part to clean it up for those who do watch it.—Janis Callaway, Morrow, Georgia.

Helps me to lose weight

May I write and tell you how much I have enjoyed the April, 1978, THESE TIMES magazine. I enjoyed the story "The Unfroked One" and also read the article "Pray Those Pounds Away." I am also an overweight person, and the article helped me with my own problem.—Mildred D. Jones, Illinois.

Prisoners enjoy THESE TIMES

Just a quick note to let you know that we regularly receive two copies of THESE TIMES here at the Plymouth County House of Correction, and the publications are read and appreciated.—Raymond W. Burton, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Paying for my own now

For several years I have been receiving free subscriptions to your fine magazine. I do not know whom to thank for this service. I enjoy your magazine very much and find it one of the best and loveliest periodicals that I receive.

I am a Southern Baptist and a retired missionary from the Republic of China, formerly on the mainland and now in Taiwan. I find many articles that I clip from your magazine to share with my fellow Baptists. While in Shanghai and Taiwan, I have known many of your splendid doctors and nurses overseas, and we consider your hospital the best one in Taipei. We do thank you for being co-workers with us in witnessing to the unsaved Chinese.

I am enclosing a check for my subscription for the coming year, with thanks for the free subscriptions I have received in the past.—Lorene Tilford, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Will take it as long as I live

Enclosed you will find a check. Please renew my subscription to THESE TIMES. This is really an excellent paper. I enjoy it very much. I wish it were on the Perpetual Plan, since I expect to take it as long as I live.—Bessie M. Dick, Baker, Oregon.

The consensus of opinion

THESE TIMES improves with each issue, it seems to me. And that is the consensus of opinion with all the folks to whom I am sending it. We do appreciate it!—Grace Nicola, Worthington, Ohio.

Likes covers

Someone has been so kind as to give me a subscription to your magazine. Although I don't agree with all your articles, many of them are very timely and well written. June Strong and a number of other writers are much appreciated. Your colorful front page and well-presented articles are a real asset to your publication.—K. M., Grand Haven, Michigan.

Tempted to steal a copy

I have just returned from a two-week stay in Kettering Memorial Hospital. During the second week while I was ambulatory, I found a new copy of THESE TIMES and was tempted to claim it for my own. That's stealing; so I took out the order form and subscribed for myself. Will be proud to have a magazine like yours in my home. Later on I'll be subscribing for some of my friends.—Clyde Homan, Miamisburg, Ohio. ☪

THESE TIMES welcomes letters from readers on subjects dealt with in the magazine. The editors reserve the right to publish those letters they choose and to edit them for clarity and length before printing. Send to: Letters, THESE TIMES, Box 59, Nashville, TN 37202.



He's plugged into God

by Walter Oleksy

Attached to a machine twelve hours each day, Larry claims that "faith in the Lord is the only thing that keeps me going."

FOR the past ten years, because of a rare disease, eighteen-year-old Larry Lippig of Lombard, near Chicago, Illinois, has been attached to a life-giving machine for twelve hours a day. But what he is really plugged into is the power and love of God.

When he was eight years old, Larry became the victim of Crohn's disease, a perforation of the bowel. His body rejects nourishment, and he has to be plugged into a lifeline machine, called the IMED Pump, twelve hours each day. It furnishes his body intravenously with all necessary nutrients. Though Larry eats two meals a day, it does him very little good, and he could not survive without the machine.

But being attached to a machine half of each day does not keep Larry from being active and productive, having fun, and serving God. "I love to bowl," says Larry between turns at the local bowling alley with some of his young friends. "And I also love to play tennis and baseball."

He also sings in his church a cappella choir, gives Bible readings and sometimes the sermon. "My favorite theme," says Larry, a freckle-faced boy with a cheering smile on his face, "is how often the Lord has saved my life."

Last autumn, undergoing emergency surgery, his bowel burst; then his

heart stopped. His mother called their minister, and he got to the hospital in three minutes.

"I may die tonight," Larry told the minister. But as the evening wore on, he became convinced that God wanted him to live a little longer, and he slowly began to recover. Shortly before Christmas Larry's recovery was so miraculous that he himself drove home from the hospital.

After his recovery, Larry returned to high school and was graduated. He hopes to start college soon and major in business. He comes by his interest in business from his mother, who owns an accounting and tax firm. Larry works there part time, learning the accounting business from the ground up as he helps with payroll and profit and loss statements. Larry's father works as a man-of-all-trades for a service corporation.

"Faith in the Lord is the only thing that keeps me going each day," says Larry. "I like to spread the word. Without the Lord, I couldn't have done anything."

Larry is a member of his church's singing group, thirteen boys and thirteen girls who sing a cappella at churches throughout the Midwest. At many of the concerts Larry acts as a witness to the love and mercy of God.

"When I'm away from home longer than twelve hours, I have to take my lifeline machine with me," Larry confides. "I'm usually plugged into it from ten o'clock at night to ten in the morning. So I can honestly tell people at our concerts in other parts of the country that when I stop singing about God's love that night, I have to go to my motel room and get attached to my machine again. It gives faith and

encouragement to people suffering from the same disease and also to others who have another cross to bear.

"Everyone has a cross to bear. But if you plug yourself into God, He helps you to carry it. Without Him it surely would be too heavy for us to bear."

Besides the discomfort and inconvenience of being attached to a machine half a day, it is very expensive to live off one. The weekly tab for vitamins and minerals averages \$500, and the family's medical bills amount to about \$40,000 a year.

Last year, to help the Lippigs meet those expenses, friends and church members sponsored a musical tribute to Larry. They raised about \$26,000 for a medical trust for him. Meanwhile three doctors are working toward getting him state or federal medical help.

The Lippigs have another son, Ray, seventeen, and daughters Sandy, sixteen, and Laura, nine.

One of the high points in Larry's courageous life came recently when he met his sports hero, Rocky Blier, halfback with the Pittsburgh Steelers football team. "Rocky told me to keep trusting in God," recalls Larry. "He said he was injured in Vietnam and was told he would never walk again. But he put his faith in God, and now he's a star player!"

You wonder how Larry does it—how he gets the strength and courage to keep going. But then the look on his face and his life-giving smile explain it all.

Larry is a walking testimonial for faith in God. He tells others who come to him for encouragement, "The Lord has saved my life so often, He will save yours too."

Walter Oleksy, author of four books and former feature writer for "The Chicago Tribune," has appeared in "Family Circle," "Modern Maturity," and "Reader's Digest." He enjoys writing about "interesting, courageous people of all ages." © 1978 by Walter Oleksy.

FRANK ANSWERS

What is original sin?

I can't agree with a writer's statement: "We are all born in sin" as an interpretation of Psalm 51:5 ("In sin did my mother conceive me," THESE TIMES, January, 1978, p. 31). It is my belief there is no time in the life of a human being when a person is more innocent and absent of sin than at birth. Please explain your definition of sin.

The writer (Dr. Colin D. Standish) was not denying your belief that there is no time when a human being is more innocent and absent of sin than at birth. In terms of "acts of sin" a baby has done nothing. The writer's point was that Psalm 51:5 indicates that "all of us have a basic disposition to walk in pathways that alienate us from God (emphasis mine). This is a true fact that experience bears out. Every human being is born with a natural bent to sin. This is the teaching of the Bible.

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one," Job declares in chapter 14, verse 4. Every child is born in the state of sin, the same state his parents are in. He has a self-centered nature, and when he is able, he will show that selfish nature and commit self-centered acts—not because he has learned them from the sinful people around him necessarily, but because his inner nature is self-centered.

The apostle Paul refers to this fact by observing that "by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world" (Romans 5:12), and as a result man's nature has become carnal. Man is now in a natural state of "enmity against God." The carnal mind "is not subject to the law of God, neither

indeed can be" (Romans 8:7; cf. Romans 7:14). The sad truth is that mankind is a sinful race (from birth to death) and is in need of divine grace and salvation. Only the grace of God can change the human heart and turn it from its self-centered independence to a trustful dependence upon God.

Some Christians have misconstrued the truth about man's sinful bent to mean that every infant is *personally* guilty of Adam's original sin and is thereby automatically lost should he or she die unbaptized in infancy. The Bible does not teach such a doctrine. It is largely silent on the subject of infant death and salvation. We can be sure that the One who said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14), will do what is right and just when He makes up the jewels of His kingdom.

When God commanded rest on the seventh day, did He mean to exclude only the work we do for a paycheck, or did He define work as any of the following: washing dishes, cooking meals, milking cows, and caring for livestock?

The fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11), which calls the follower of God to Sabbath rest, says in part: "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." The "work" referred to is the toil of our secular occupations by which we make our livelihood. Labor for worldly profit or pleasure is to be laid aside in order that, being freed from the daily grind, the child of God may spend time in gaining spiritual and physical refreshment.

Jesus, our Example, made it abundantly clear that the Sabbath was never intended to be a day of mere idleness. It was a day for spiritual uplift, a day designed to promote the great objective of divine redemption—an objective that at times may involve considerable amounts of physical activity. Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man, for man's blessing and good (Mark 2:27).


Man does have a proper work to do on the Sabbath, and that work will be in harmony with the objectives of the Sabbath.

For example, the necessities of life will have to be cared for. Israel was taught to reduce these to a minimum by preparing a double supply of food on the sixth day, the day before the Sabbath (Exodus 16:23, 29). The sixth day, or Friday, became known to them as the "preparation" day (see Mark 15:42).

Many modern Sabbathkeepers follow ancient Israel's practice by preparing sufficient food on Friday for the Sabbath meals so that little time and effort is needed to warm up a tasty repast for the Sabbath dinner. By cleaning the home, preparing the clothes, and by taking their baths on the preparation day, the mother and children may be as free from their ordinary routines as is the father from his job, and so the whole family may spend the Sabbath together and with God apart from the usual pressures of the workweek.

Furthermore, Jesus made it evident by His own acts on the Sabbath that it is "lawful to do good on the sabbath days" (Mark 3:4). The sick must be cared for, the wants of the needy supplied. Acts of mercy toward man or beast are in full harmony with the spirit of the Sabbath. Domestic animals must be fed. The livestock must be milked or otherwise cared for (cf. Luke 13:15).

Most households would find it a necessity to wash dishes after meals. But some families, not pressed by a lack of tableware, would rather use the golden moments in Bible study, in reading Christian literature, in walking with their families in the out-of-doors and showing their children the handiwork of the Creator, or in visiting the physically or spiritually sick.

Sacred time was designed to free the Christian as much as possible from the regular routines in order that the bond between God and His child might be strengthened. 



In this column Pastor Frank B. Holbrook answers questions about spiritual truth, ethical behavior, and Biblical understanding. Write to him c/o

THESE TIMES, Box 59, Nashville, Tennessee 37202. Names are confidential. If a personal answer is desired, please send an addressed envelope. Only questions of general interest are published.



THIS TIME

WE PRINT Margaret Chenoweth's article ("My Dangerous Journey Into the Occult," page 2) in an effort to dispel some of the ignorance concerning the widespread intrusion of the occult into every aspect of our existence. You find it in religion, science, politics, horticulture, music, medicine, literature. You name it—it is there.

The most religious person, as well as the so-called scientist, can become enmeshed unless he understands the dangers of dabbling with such things as telepathy, psychokinesis, clairvoyance, clairaudience, spiritism, ESP, spirit control, and parapsychology.

In a letter accompanying "My Dangerous Journey" the author wrote, "I am an active professional member of the National Writers Club and write under my great-grandmother's name, Margaret Chenoweth."

"'My Dangerous Journey' is a true story, and it happened to me exactly as written. Although the extraordinary events occurred over a six-month period in 1974, the experience left me so shattered it has taken this long for me to bring myself to use the material. During the course of my 'near downfall' I related each subsequent experience to my 'new friend,' members of the group she had introduced me to, as well as to close family and friends. So it was known in certain circles that I was interested in the occult.

"But no longer. I now know emphatically that the forces of evil are terrifyingly real and rampant. I believe that dabbling in occult areas, no matter how casually and innocently—particularly I think, 'innocently'—can and very often does have dangerous consequences.

"It was with this thought that I brought myself to write of my own near-fatal experience, hoping it might serve as a warning to other gullibles. I did not include the fact that, soon after the awful night when an evil force/presence filled my room in an effort, I believe, to possess me, within days all my lovely plants withered and died. They were dead all right, but who would believe the reason I could give for their demise?"

We are indebted to Ms. Chenoweth for sharing her experience.



Kenneth J. Holland, editor

Kenneth J. Holland

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in all His fullness to all the world.

We believe the Bible
to be the authoritative Word of God,
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Jesus to be our all-sufficient Saviour,
and the coming Christ to be our only hope
as the world nears its cataclysmic end.

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The source of true happiness

by Roy Lessin *If you've been searching for happiness but never find it, then it's time you let God come into your life and fill it with vitality and joy.*

LET'S FACE IT! For you and a lot of other people, to become religious is a waste of time. The thing that's important to you is pleasure. Truly to become a religious person is an unnecessary hardship.

Sure, there are lots of so-called religious people in the world today, but there are many who take a more realistic approach to life.

The drug addict says, "As soon as I take this fix, all will be well again!" Meanwhile the drug eats away at his body like a cancer.

The alcoholic says, "These next few drinks will bring release for a while," and yet his character is cheapened, his home divided, and his money wasted.

Many say, "Sex brings the only real satisfaction," and while their hearts burn with lust, they cheapen girl friends, destroy marriages, abuse themselves, and still, unsatisfied, long for more.

Even among the religious, earnest Jews have said, "I still have no peace." Devoted Catholics have said, "I still fear death." Active Protestants have said, "I'm trying the best I can and yet it all seems so empty."

We said religion is a drag, and it is. Going to church is boring and reading the Bible and praying is a chore if God isn't real to you. After all, what's the use of "playing church" when your heart wants other things? Many realize this and have tried other means to find the answers. Yet they have failed.

Some have pursued fame and in the end have said, "What's it all for?"

Some have tried fortune and have had breakdowns because of the pressures.

What's the path of your life going to be? Don't make it formal, empty religion—that's a drag, a waste of time. By the way, it's also a waste of God's time. God doesn't want you going off in a hundred different directions. Instead God wants to give you something, and it is not a counterfeit life; it is reality.

He doesn't want you to trust a set of laws, but a Person. He wants you to know His Son, Jesus Christ, who is alive right now. He came to earth and died on the cross to save you from a wasted life. He wants to come into your heart and life and fill the empty place. That is why you haven't been able to find the answers in all those things you've been trying.

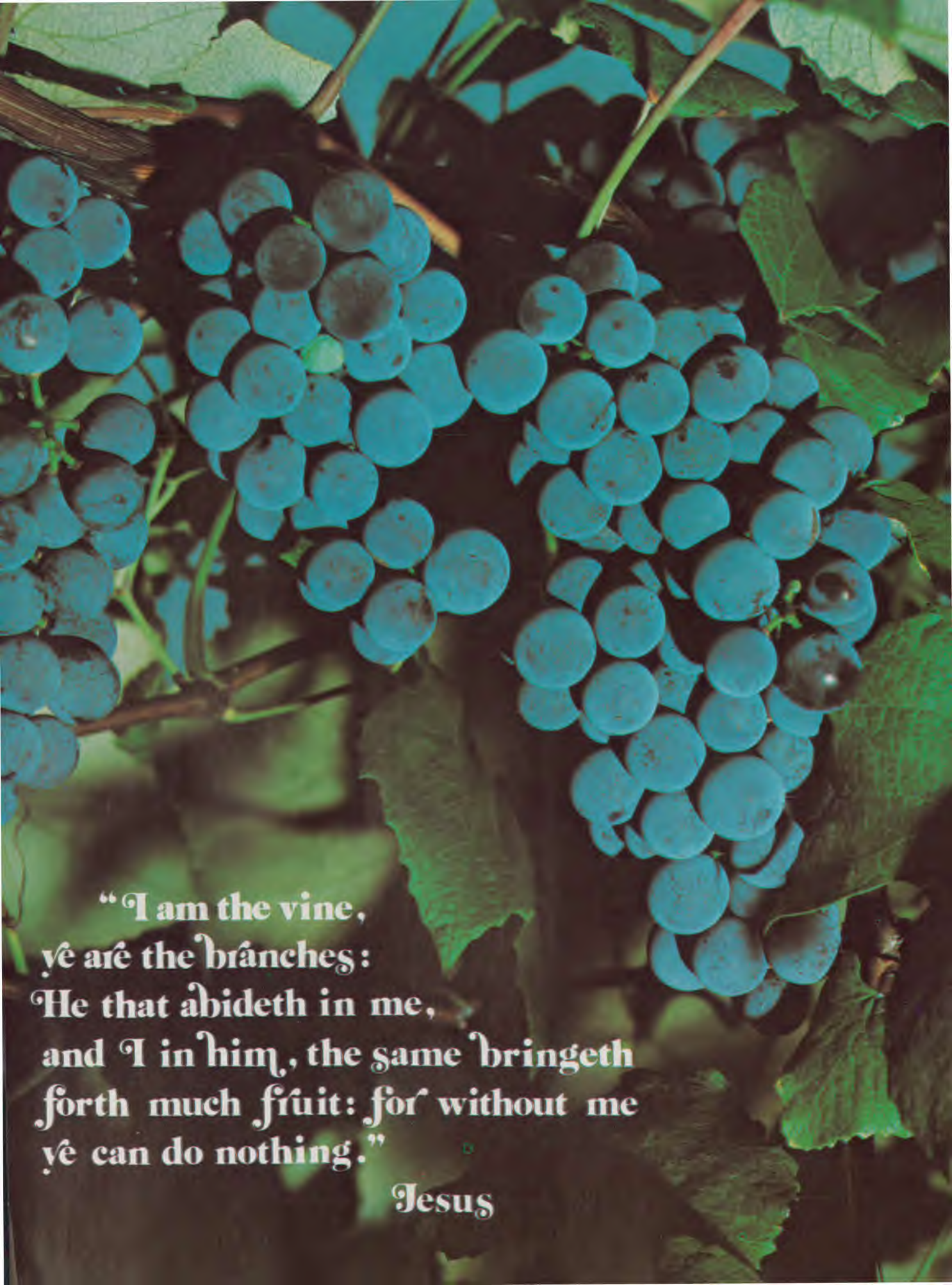
You were made to know God personally, living within your heart and controlling your life. Jesus loves you. Sin has kept you from Him. Stop going in that direction in which you are heading. Instead, turn things over to Him. Tell Him you need Him. Let Him come into your life so that you may learn what it means to have reality.

Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Jesus is the One to come to—no one else. Will you come? Jesus also said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). There is no other way. He is waiting. Right now put your life into His hands.

Roy Lessin, among other things, is a writer for the American Tract Society.

Reprints of this article in tract form are available from the American Tract Society, Oradell, New Jersey 07649.

Photograph by Camerique



“I am the vine,
ye are the branches:
He that abideth in me,
and I in him, the same bringeth
forth much fruit: for without me
ye can do nothing.”

Jesus

You can have a more satisfying life

You're a member of the human race—working, eating, sleeping, living in the fast-paced world of today. Most of the time life goes along pretty good—not terrifically great, but not too bad either.

Like most thinking people, however, you wonder now and then if there shouldn't be more to life. Down underneath somewhere you feel dissatisfied with things the way they are.

- * Are there times when life today seems to make little sense?
- * Do you sometimes wonder where it all will end?
- * Is there any real hope for peace, either among nations or in your own heart?

Everyone has questions such as these from time to time. Peace seems so elusive, the end uncertain, that often life *doesn't* seem to make much sense. No wonder we have questions! But can we find answers? Yes. You *can* have a more satisfying life.

No doubt this copy of *THESE TIMES* has started providing some answers. And if you have appreciated its contents, we would like to introduce you to a completely new and different magazine called *Today's Life*. It's FREE!



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