

the
PLAIN TRUTH

JANUARY 1978

a magazine of understanding

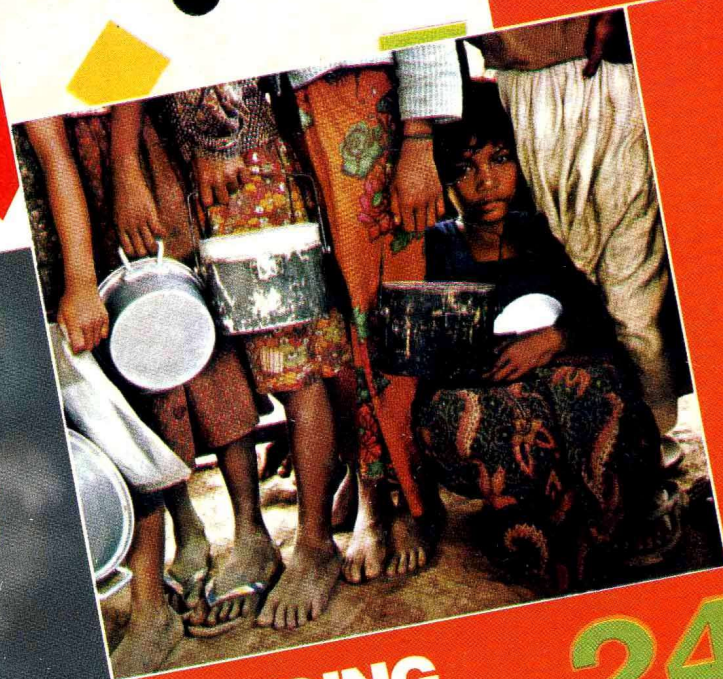
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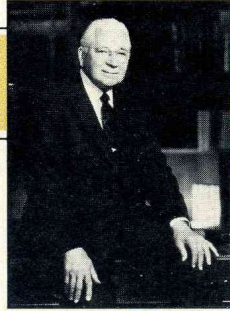
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Personal from...

The Beautiful Analogy of Human Reproduction

Some of the teachings in the Bible are a little hard for the average thinking mind to understand. James tells us to count it all joy when trials, ordeals, reverses beset us. Troubles a joy? That's pretty hard to accept, isn't it? And, for the average person, a lot harder to put into practice.

Few find any pleasure, let alone joy, in the obstacles and troubles they encounter. Yet this biblical teaching says we ought so to count them. There is a reason, although few understand it.

In one of the Psalms you'll read that the righteous are going to have to bear *many* afflictions. But, it promises, the Eternal will deliver us out of them all—if we believe and trust Him!

Again, it is through much tribulation that we must enter the Kingdom of God. Why? There's a reason!

Now consider another biblical teaching hard for some to understand.

About a year ago I wrote an article, now available in booklet form, *What Do You Mean—Born Again?* In the fifth chapter of Ephesians you find a husband-wife relationship pictured as corresponding to Christ and the Church. Scriptural teaching assures us that, at His coming, Christ is going to *marry* the Church. Also, the Scriptures teach that the Church will, at His coming, be *born* of God, by a resurrection of all who have died, and the instantaneous conversion from mortal to immortal of those then living (I Cor. 15:50-53).

So one man reasons: Could a full-grown man marry an infant girl baby, just born? If those in the Church are to be just then born of God, how can they marry Christ before they grow up?

This, too, seems difficult for some to comprehend. Yet the answer to James' teaching—the understanding of what James really means—is also the answer to this seeming inconsistency.

There is a third seeming inconsistency, hard for some to understand. About a year and a half ago in this column I explained how, contrary to the thinking of many, a Christian may—and too often does—actually commit sin *after* he is converted. He *should not*, of course.

But too often he does, and yet he still remains a Christian. The true explanation of James' teaching, first mentioned above, is also the explanation of this experience.

So let's understand!

Why were we born in the first place? What is the real purpose of human life? God Almighty the Creator is reproducing Himself! As truly as we mortal humans have been given power to reproduce ourselves—to bring forth progeny in our own image, born with our very nature—even so the Great God is bringing forth sons in His image, born with His very divine nature!

The very purpose of our existence is that we be begotten as God's children, and become born of Him.

And human reproduction is the very type of spiritual reproduction. What God created at the time described in the first chapter of Genesis was a physical creation. You'll find nothing spiritual there. In physical man, made of the dust of the ground, God created the material with which He may mold, shape, form, and create the spiritual being. He pictures us as the clay, Himself as the Potter—forming us into the spiritual image of His designing.

Now human reproduction, I say, pictures spiritual reproduction. Each human, since Adam and Eve, started from a tiny egg, called an ovum, the size of a pinpoint. It was produced in the body of the mother. The egg is incomplete, of itself. It has a life of only about 48 hours, according to some authorities. Unless fertilized by the life-giving sperm cell from the human father within that limited lifetime, it dies.

Each human, spiritually speaking, is like an egg. The average human lifetime is said to be 70 years. Adam was created incomplete, and each of us was born incomplete—that is, we were made to need the Holy Spirit of God. And unless, within our limited lifespan of some 70 years, we are begotten of God—by His Spirit which is His *immortal divine LIFE*, entering to impart eternal life to us—we shall die—and that shall be the end—except that God has appointed a resurrection of all who have lived, and, for those (Continued on page 43)

Is God Fair ?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Look at the world today! War, famine, pestilence! Poverty, inequality, hunger, want! Sickness, disease, suffering, death! Crime, graft, dishonesty, corruption! Insanity, degeneration, decay! Unhappiness, fear, wretchedness and woe!

How, so many are asking, can a supreme, all-powerful God of love permit such human woe? Why is He permitting civilization itself to crumble?

Is God Fair?

Listen! Some men are saying, "God isn't fair!"—or "Is there a God, after all?" But what do you suppose men would say if God took away their right to think and do as they please? For God could never stop this awful carnage without *forcing* men to act according to His will—denying them a free will of their own!

It is men's ways, so contrary to God's ways, that have brought on

this unhappy state. And they have brought on all the world's sorrows and anguish in spite of the pleadings of God. He says, "Your ways are not my ways" (Isa. 55:8).

God's ways, had they been followed, would have led inevitably to peace, happiness, prosperity and joy. God always has revealed to men His ways. Always He has pleaded with the human family.

Suppose God had taken the only alternative. Suppose He had forced men, against their wills, to have lived according to His laws?

Can't you almost hear the defiant, rebellious, stiff-necked human race indignantly screaming at the Almighty: "You can't cram your religion down my throat!" For it is a matter of religion. Can't we see that had God followed that course, more than ever men would have shouted, "God isn't fair!"

For six thousand years men have lived in defiance of God's laws. Had

God denied them this right to be wrong, men would have accused God of injustice, demanding freedom to follow their own ways.

God's plan has for its purpose the creating of perfect CHARACTER in beings that are separate entities from God, yet members of the very family of God. Character cannot be created automatically by fiat—it must be developed through *experience!*

Nor could character be instilled without free moral agency. To achieve this great purpose—that of producing the supreme pinnacle of all God's creation, sons of God having perfect character—man has to be convinced, of his own free will, that God's laws are just, and that His ways are the only right ways for man! Man must turn to them, voluntarily! This lesson could be learned only by EXPERIENCE!

In the beginning, Satan appeared to contest the wisdom of God's law.

This law is, simply, love for God and love for neighbor, as defined in the ten broad principles of the Ten Commandments. A fundamental, spiritual, eternal law. The philosophy Christ taught is that it is more blessed to give than to receive. But Satan argued for the GETTING way. Competition, he argued, is the lifeblood of activity. Self-desire provides incentive to endeavor. Vanity spurs to action. And so, in Satan's philosophy, self-desire, competition, strife, provide the root-principle for accomplishment. The way of getting is the way of progress and advancement.

Had not God permitted this selfish way to be tried, tested, and demonstrated, God's creatures could argue throughout eternity that they had been denied the better way.

The Devil's Week

And so God turned over to Satan the first six days of one week, consisting of seven one-thousand-year days, in which to demonstrate the falsity of this way—the way of greed.

During the first six days of this week of seven thousand years Satan was permitted to retain dominion over all the earth. "Six days," God said, "thou shalt labour, and do all thy work"—his work of deception and hate—"but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." Six thousand-year days have been permitted Satan for his labor of deception. Even then his dominion has been limited to the power of influence and suggestion. Never has God permitted even Satan arbitrarily to force men against their wills.

And so for nearly six thousand years men have been left free to accept the self-seeking competitive philosophy of Satan, or to follow the golden rule of God. And for six thousand years Satan has labored. And mankind has fallen for his delusion!

Satan's philosophy is the philosophy of the world today. On it our present civilization has been built. A civilization men love and cherish, and for which they patriotically sacrifice their lives! A civilization developed on desire for self-gain,

competition, strife! In its success is determined by how much a man has been able to get, not on how well he has served.

God has never left men in ignorance of the true way of life. Always He has made known the true values—the way of His spiritual law of love! Continually God has pleaded, with patience and in love. He pleaded through Noah in the days before the Flood. He set up a nation of His own on earth that pledged to follow His laws, dedicated voluntarily to God's ways of life. But ancient Israel turned from God's ways,

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and persecuted and killed God's prophets!

God sent His only begotten Son to point men back to the true paths. And Him, too, men rejected and killed.

During these six thousand years since Adam, men continually have spurned God's love, rejected His law, turned a deaf ear to His prophets and His true ministers. They have built a world after the false philosophy of Satan, replete with its pagan customs, traditions and beliefs. Today people are hopelessly engulfed in these false ways, but, being deceived, realize it not at all!

Satan is revealed as the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4). The original inspired Greek should properly be translated, "the god of this age." And this worldly civilization worships its God. The appalling fact unrealized by the world is that Satan, not the Eternal, is its god! The Creator God "is not the author

of confusion," we read in I Corinthians 14:33. Its real author is Satan, the world's god! And so he has his many denominations and sects, all striving in a babylon of confusion!

The Devil's Work

Today the people of organized religion refuse to hear the law of the Lord (Isa. 30:8-11). They demand that their ministers preach the soft and smooth things—the deceits! They have turned away from the truth, and are accepting and believing fables (II Tim. 4:2-4).

Yes, Satan has *organized* religion. He himself appears, not as a devil with horns and a tail, bearing a pitchfork, but "is transformed into an *angel of light*" (II Cor. 11:14). His ministers are transformed *as* the ministers of righteousness, appearing *as* the apostles of Christ! (Verses 13, 15.) But they are preaching "*another* Jesus" (verse 4), in the power of "*another* spirit," and deceiving men with "*another* gospel" than the true gospel of the Kingdom which Christ brought and Paul and all the apostles preached! (Gal. 1:6-7.)

Satan's congregations go in for much *form*. "Having a *form* of godliness, but denying the *POWER* thereof: from such turn away," plainly warns God's Word! (II Tim. 3:5.) The present worldly order—its competitive principle, its customs and traditions, its political systems—are upheld by false churches within every land! Truly, all nations are deceived! (Rev. 12:9; 17:2; 18:3.)

Jesus Christ appeared 1900 years ago as a messenger bearing a message from God. He brought to an unhappy world steeped in false ways the "*good news* of the KINGDOM OF GOD." A Kingdom now, soon, to replace these crumbling governments on earth!

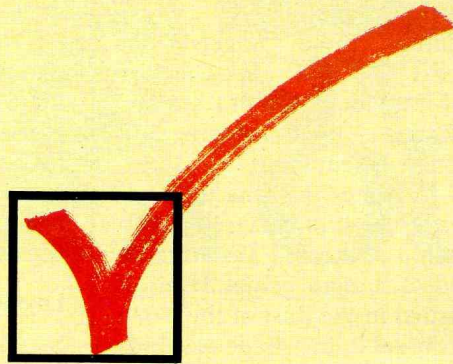
That Kingdom today is near at hand—even at the doors! (Luke 21:31.)

Thank God, we are near the end of the six working days allotted to Satan's dominion. God's thousand-year Sabbath day is just about to dawn!

There is a saying that it is darkest just before the dawn. Now we see on
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WHY NOT?

by Jon Hill



WHY NOT KEEP A RESOLUTION?

Making resolutions—especially at this time of year—is easy. It's keeping them that is the problem.

It doesn't have to be New Year's Eve. Every day is a new day. And make an easy one. Don't be so hard on yourself and set such standards you will never accomplish anything. Don't try to change yourself overnight. Think small—but above all ACT! One small change could change your whole life!

How about: "I resolve to read the Bible a little bit every day." Begin with Genesis, that's the first page, and it even means "beginning."

How about: "I resolve not to watch television more than three hours a day." That ought to be easier than you think—and think of the time it will free up for *doing* something you've wanted to for so long. At least resolve not to believe 90 plus percent of what you see on the thing.

How about: "I resolve to eat natural foods and get off the junk food kick!" It's cheaper, tastes better, makes you healthier and cuts down on doctor bills.

How about: "I resolve to tell my wife (husband) I love her (him) at least once a month—and give the kids a hug (while they're not watching TV)!"

We've got some little booklets that would help on these and many other resolutions. The titles: *Read the Book*, *Managing Your Personal Finances*, *Your Marriage Can Be Happy*, and *Principles of Healthful Living*. Resolve to write for one or all; they're free. Why not?

Is God Fair?

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every hand the final fruitage of men's ways. Written in unerasable blood, in human misery, anguish and despair is the six-thousand-year record of experience!

Even now men will not heed this horrible lesson—not until they are forced to see it!

But, as Satan's sixth "working day" closes, God is about to step in and supernaturally interfere!

The coming seventh millennium—typified by the Feast of Tabernacles—shall see Satan restrained. Christ will return to rule the earth with all the power of God. God's new order for the next thousand years will restore peace, happiness, and joy.

Then men may look back over this present world, and compare! Never will God force a single human being, against his own will, into salvation and eternal life.

But, with the seven-thousand-year record of experience set plainly before seeing eyes, do you think anyone will want to return to these ways we seem now to love? Not many, you may be sure of that! Yet some, even then, will rebel.

Finally the world shall acknowledge, of its own free volition, that God's ways are right. Christ, says the scripture, "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8-9.) Even He who never did wrong! "And being made perfect"—through experience—"he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

Some day we shall look upon God's plan with breathtaking admiration and awe! The suffering of this present time shall have faded completely from mind. The lessons of experience we shall have with us for eternity! Finally humanity shall accept God's ways of life, knowing that they are right ways. The happiness and joy we shall then experience cannot be conceived by our minds today! Through all eternity we shall worship and praise the Eternal God for His wisdom, His mercy, His love!

Do you think anyone, then, will look back and say, "God isn't fair"? □

Personal from...

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who reject His gift of eternal life, the final second death in the lake of fire.

But, in the case of the human ovum, once fertilized as a begotten human, the egg—now called an embryo—is kept within the body of the mother, and is nourished and fed material food through her and protected by her. And there it must grow, being fed physically through the mother, large enough to be born. After a number of weeks, the embryo is called a fetus, and at birth it is a human baby.

In like manner, the Bible calls the Church the “mother of us all.” That is, the mother of Christians—those begotten of God. It is the function of the Church to protect and feed, spiritually, on the spiritual food of God’s Word, those begotten children of God, so that we may grow spiritually, in the divine character, ready to be born.

Surely this is a wonderful comparison. Yet types and antitypes are not always alike in every detail.

When a physical baby is born, it is not ready for marriage. When the spiritual child of God is born he will be fully mature for the spiritual marriage. How can this be? This is what one thinking man could not see.

The unborn human fetus is only growing physically. At birth the human baby knows nothing. He is helpless. He must be taught. He must learn. He is born merely with a mind *capable* of learning, knowing, thinking. He is not yet of mature size physically or mentally. Many do marry who are still entirely immature spiritually and/or emotionally. But we do assume that one has reasonable maturity physically and mentally before marriage. In the human, this development takes place in the human state after the human birth.

Therefore, the human baby is not ready for marriage at birth.

But the spirit-born are different!

Just as the fertilized ovum—the embryo which becomes the fetus—must grow physically from material food, so the Spirit-begotten child of

God must grow spiritually before he can be born. But there is a difference!

The fetus does not attain to complete physical maturity before birth, and has no mental maturity. But, in the spiritual rebirth, one must attain reasonable spiritual maturity before he is spirit-born.

Now what is spiritual growth? Just as the physical embryo-fetus must grow physically large enough to be born, so the Spirit-begotten Christian must grow spiritually or he will never be born of God. But spiritual growth is CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT.

The Spirit-begotten starts out with a MIND from the beginning. God is perfect character—divine, spiritual character. God is also love. And perfect spiritual character is the way of love! Such character is the attainment of the ability, in a separate independent entity of free moral agency, to be able to discern right from wrong—the true values from the false—truth from error—the right way from the wrong, and then to make the right choice or decision, even against self-desire, impulse or temptation; plus the will and self-discipline to resist the wrong and to do the right.

No human, with human nature, has the power—alone by himself—to do this. But God has made available the spiritual power and help man lacks. Man must desire to know—must hunger and thirst for truth; man must make his own decision, exercise his own will, even against the pulls of his nature. But without the help of God—without spiritual power from God—man is utterly unable.

That is why truly converted Christians sometimes actually do sin. They are like the apostle Paul, as he describes himself in Romans 7. With his mind he wanted to go the way of God’s law, yet he found himself unable. Another law warred within him against the good resolutions of his mind. But the sequel to Romans 7 is Romans 8—the Holy Spirit chapter. Who, Paul cried out, could save him from this body of death he struggled against in vain? The answer is, God, through His Holy Spirit.

A true Christian doesn’t want to

sin—should not. But sometimes he finds himself caught in the vise of habit, or overwhelmed by temptation or by circumstances from which he is unable to free himself. Surely, had such a one been continually praying, keeping himself close to God, and detached from the world or its lures or the temptations of the flesh, he probably would have had sufficient divine help to have prevented the sinning. But only Jesus Christ ever did keep that close to God!

God looks on the heart. In such a case, the Christian does not sin maliciously, with malice aforethought. He is merely caught in the vortex of a temptation which sucks him helplessly down into the sin. Then he is terribly sorry. He is disgusted with himself. He repents. He goes to work to overcome. He may not succeed, due to human weakness, at once. But he remains determined and finally does, with God’s help, overcome completely. Many a true Christian has had such a struggle over a particular human weakness and temptation, and after even several setbacks, finally, through God’s power, won the victory and fought his way free.

God looks on the heart. God forgives in such cases. The living Christ, our High Priest, has compassion, is filled with mercy—as long as the attitude is right, the *desire* of the inner man is to conquer the flesh and overcome the temptation and be free from it entirely. In the end, it is God who gives the victory. But, in such a struggle, the Christian develops character.

Now character, I have said many times, is something God does not create automatically. It is developed through experience. The development of that character is the very purpose of our being alive. Also the development of that character, unlike the purely physical growth of the unborn baby, actually is growing toward spiritual maturity, right now in the begettal stage prior to spirit birth—in this present mortal human life.

Notice how the “mother of us all,” the Church, is to protect and feed those in it, until they reach spiritual maturity. In I Corinthians 12 you’ll read how God gives spiri-

tual gifts for various administrations, or functions of service. In Ephesians 4:11-14, Christ has given special spiritual abilities or talents to certain ones in a chain of authority under Him in the Church—and notice for what purpose:

“And his [Christ’s] gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ [the Church], UNTIL we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (RSV).

In other words, to full spiritual maturity!

Now why should we count the troubles and problems and temptations that beset us as all joy?

Simply because we cannot hurdle these obstacles successfully in our own power. They drive us to seek help from God. To go to God for the wisdom to know what to do, and the power to be able to do it, requires faith. This is a living faith. It is alive. It is active.

When we meet such trials, we often do not know what to do. We lack the wisdom to make the right decision. So open your Bible to the first chapter of James. Notice verse 5.

If you lack wisdom, in such trials, go to God for it! But ask in faith—no wavering—no doubting. Be sure God will not fail, but will give you this wisdom. Depend upon Him for it. If you waver, you are like a wave in the ocean—tossed back and forth—going nowhere! So, instead of wavering, be steadfast. And if you don’t get the answer immediately from God, have patience. Don’t give up. Trust Him.

Now notice verses 2-3: “Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (Revised Standard Version). These trials force you to your knees. You must have faith to meet them. They test your faith. They develop spiritual character!

In the King James Version, it says the trying of your faith produces patience. It produces that kind of pa-

tience that is steadfastness. That is character!

Sure, it may be unpleasant for a while. But, Paul assures us that if we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with Him—and the glory to be revealed in us is so incomparably greater than anything we now are, that this promised future for eternity is something to rejoice over!

Yes, count it all joy! Even if unpleasant. It is maturing you, now, for the marriage to Christ. The Church of God shall be born into the Kingdom of God! The Kingdom of God will not be composed of spiritual know-nothings and infants.

When we are born again—born of God—resurrected in spirit bodies, those bodies will not be small, like a human physical infant which must grow to full physical size. We shall look as we do now, so far as form and shape and features are concerned. But the resurrected body will be a different body—composed of spirit instead of flesh and blood (I Cor. 15:35-44).

The original twelve apostles were Christ’s witnesses. That is, they were actual eyewitnesses that Jesus rose from the dead—that the living resurrected Christ was the same Jesus who had been crucified. They were with Him forty days after His resurrection. But nobody will be foolish enough to suggest that when Christ was born very Son of God by the resurrection (Romans 1:4) that He was resurrected in a tiny infant’s body composed of spirit. He was resurrected full grown, as He had been when crucified. How did the apostles know He was the same Jesus? Because they knew what Jesus had looked like—and in His born-again, resurrected body He looked the same, except He now was composed of spirit instead of matter!

The resurrected Christ was perfect—He was very God! But He did not grow up into perfection after He was resurrected. It was during His human lifetime, setting us the example, that He was made perfect, as you read in Hebrews 2:10 and 5:8-9.

Thus it is plain that we must develop spiritual character, growing to spiritual adulthood, during this life—not after our resurrection in glory! This is the spiritual growth, of which the physical growth of the un-

born child, from tiny embryo to a size and weight of some six to eight pounds at birth, is a type. The physical growth of the unborn human is a growth of physical size and weight. The spiritual growth of the begotten but yet unborn spiritual child of God is a growth in spiritual character, not of physical volume, size or weight. The human baby merely grows large enough to be born prior to birth—not to physical or mental maturity. But he does grow. And this physical growth is the type of the spiritual growth by feeding on the Word of God, and prayer, and Christian fellowship, and participation in the Work of God in the life of the begotten child of God.

The difference is merely the difference between matter and spirit. One is a material growth. Material growth is measured by volume, size, weight. The other is spiritual growth, measured by character development.

Jesus was born very Son of God by His resurrection (Romans 1:4). He was born fully mature. He was born in a spirit body, which was manifested to His apostles in the same apparent size and shape as when He died. When He appears on earth the second time, in His spirit glorified body, we shall be resurrected, or instantaneously changed, to a body that will be like Him (I John 3:2)—full grown—adult! □

No, you haven't been born again—

Just what do you mean—

BORN AGAIN?

—and this free booklet tells you why. To receive your copy of “Just What Do You Mean . . . Born Again?” write to the address of our office nearest you (see inside front cover).