

the
PLAIN TRUTH
a magazine of understanding



The Next Frontier?

"WE'RE ALL IN THIS THING TOGETHER..."
LEARNING THE LOST ART OF ENERGY CONSERVATION
ANGEL DUST: ANOTHER BAD TRIP

DEWEY



Personal from...

Is It Wrong to Be a Cultured Individual?

Is it wrong to be a cultured individual?

Is it wrong—is it extravagant—to purchase quality things? Some people pride themselves on lack of culture and good breeding. They actually brag: “We’re just poor folks.” They spurn good-quality merchandise, saying, “That’s too rich for my blood.” They shop for bargain prices, condemning better quality as “extravagance.” They accuse a well-dressed person of being “stuck up.”

Does God love the poor and hate the rich? People speak of “God’s poor.” Must one be poor economically, ignorant educationally, uncouth socially, in order to please God?

It’s true Jesus said, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” (Mark 10:23.) But He also clarified His statement by adding: “How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!” (Verse 24.)

In this world we have the poor, the ignorant, the uncouth and the uncultured. And at the other extreme we have the rich, the social snobs, the intellectuals.

What is right?

We say at Ambassador College that we teach not only how to earn a living, but also how to live! The college motto is: “Recapture True Values.” Out of what textbook do we teach the true values? In what textbook do we learn how to live?

Actually, the only source of this most necessary knowledge might seem a little strange to students of the average university. It is the **ONLY** textbook which imparts the most necessary of all knowledge: What is the meaning—the purpose of life? What are the true values? What is the right way to live—the way to peace, happiness, prosperity, security—the comfortable, interest-packed, enjoyable and abundant life?

Why should the one book—the Holy Bible—that holds all the right **ANSWERS**, the only rational answers, be overlooked by so many?

The Holy Bible is, actually, the foundation of knowledge. So what is the answer that comes from the textbook of the very Creator about this matter of culture,

good breeding, dress, education, financial prosperity?

Actually, surprising though it may be to some, the Bible teaching upholds prosperity, culture, education and right knowledge, acquisition of good quality merchandise, and proper attire. The Bible reveals human nature as being lazy, slovenly, yet full of vanity and greed.

When people *brag* about being poor, uneducated and uncultured, that is merely **VANITY**. It is usually to excuse shiftlessness, neglect, lack of effort.

Now is God lazy? Jesus said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). What was God’s work? That of Creator and Ruler over His creation.

What about quality? Was His work well done or poorly done? After the creation in the first chapter of Genesis, “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was **VERY GOOD**.” God placed the first man in the Garden of Eden. It was undoubtedly the most beautiful garden ever to exist on earth. God planted it. God gave the first man a job in that garden. That job was not to be lazy, shiftless and let the garden go to weeds and ugliness—but to “dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15).

In creating, God had to think, plan and design what was to be created. For example, look at a beautiful rose or a lily. There’s nothing inferior there.

His instruction to the workman: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Jesus prior to His ministry was a carpenter, a builder of buildings. In Nazareth the best and finest buildings were built of stone. The little synagogue (mentioned in Luke 4:16) was very probably one of the stone buildings that Jesus helped to build.

A man once accused me of being a “perfectionist.” But Jesus Christ *commands* that we be perfectionists: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Jesus Christ is still a builder. He rose from the dead. He is **ALIVE TODAY**. Today He is building a **SPIRITUAL** building—His church, to *become* the Kingdom of God. It must be the **FINEST** (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Just what is the difference (Continued on page 44)

*Here are scriptures to baffle
most professing Christians. How could Christ,
Himself, have been born again—and when?*

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Was Jesus Christ

BORN AGAIN?

One year ago, in *The Plain Truth* of February 1977, appeared an article captioned “Just What Do You Mean—Born Again?” It warned: “Don’t be too sure you know! Many religious people talk about being ‘born again,’ who don’t really realize what Christ meant by those words.”

That article of a year ago is available in booklet form—free for the asking.

Impossible to Believe?

But how many realize that Jesus Christ, Himself, was born again—and in the same manner in which He said we “must be born again”?

Does that seem incredible?

Just what did Christ mean, when He said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God”? The universally accepted idea of fundamentalist Christians is that being “born

again” means the experience of having one’s sins forgiven. They call it a “born-again experience.” By it they mean a sinner being converted—experiencing salvation from sin.

Many fundamentalists will say: “I am a sinner born again, and saved by grace,” and similar expressions. Have these people really been born again—or have they only been deceived? Have they had the same “born-again experience” Christ had?

But wait a minute! Surely that last sentence can’t mean what it said?

Was Jesus Christ actually born again? And in the same manner that He taught that we must be born again? Incredible? Unbelievable? Was Jesus Christ a sinner—did He need salvation from sin? No! Of course not! Yet Jesus Christ was born again—just as He taught that we must be born again!

I now show you one scripture—and there will be more later in this article—but most readers who claim

to have been “born again” will not believe it, though it is the very Word of God.

Here it is:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, *that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*” (Rom. 8:28-29).

Jesus Christ is the firstborn of *many* brethren. Jesus Christ was born again, and the *first* of many brethren to be born again!

Yet that very scripture will not be believed by many who claim to have already had a “born-again experience.”

Why Many Can’t Believe It!

I am going to give you even plainer scriptures that say Jesus Christ was the first to be born again, in the same manner that He taught that we must be born again. Yet many

who read these words will not believe these scriptures.

Do you know why? Let's take time to understand!

Just what does take place in the mind of the average person when confronted with a Scripture statement contrary to his own belief?

The average mind reacts in this manner: Whatever he has been taught, or has heard or read, and is the accepted belief of his church, he has assumed to be true. It has become rooted in his mind as if it were true fact. It has become fixed—lodged hard and fast in his mind. Millions have the firmly rooted belief that to be “born again” means the experience of a sinner being converted and put under grace.

Every scripture that has anything to do with being “born again” is viewed from this concept. It—what he already believes, not what God says—is the fixed concept by which he approaches anything on this subject. His own conviction, erroneous though it may be, is his starting point for considering any scripture on the subject—his approach—the very basis by which he seeks to understand or explain this scripture.

It never will even occur to him that his belief—his definition of what “born again” means—could be wrong. He has firmly assumed this conception to be fact. His mind, therefore, will seek to understand this scripture according to his erroneous belief—but never to question or harmonize his belief according to the scripture.

If he is unable to square the scripture with his own belief, then he does one of two things. Either he tries to interpret the scripture according to his idea of being born again, or his mind becomes confused, and he simply runs away from it—changes the subject—dismisses this scripture from his mind.

In other words, the average person who says he has already been “born again” is spiritually blinded to seeing the truth on this point. Perhaps it is impossible for him to even see the truth. He has accepted one of the fables to which God said, through Paul, the world would be turned.

The world is, spiritually, drunk on false teachings. A physically drunk man cannot see material things clearly and distinctly. They become blurred out of focus. A spiritually drunk person cannot see God's Word clearly and distinctly. The above explains the reason. He tries to see God's Word through the eye-glasses of these false teachings he has absorbed.

The average mind reacts in this manner: Whatever he has been taught, or has heard or read, and is the accepted belief of his church, he has assumed to be true. It has become rooted in his mind as if it were true fact.

It simply cannot seem to occur to his mind that what he has so carelessly accepted could be wrong.

Tell such a person that being “born again,” as Christ taught we should be, does not mean that experience that takes place when a sinner has his sins forgiven, is converted and put under grace, and he will say: “You can't tell me that! I know! I've had the experience, brother!” He may have had an “experience”—but it was a different experience than what Christ meant by being born again!

What the Bible Is

What's wrong? Not only are millions spiritually blinded by the false doctrines that came out of spiritual Babylon, but almost no one, it seems, realizes just what the Bible is.

It is God's message which He sent for mankind. It is the revealed knowledge, inspired by God—basic knowledge man needs, but cannot otherwise acquire. It is the foundation of all true knowledge.

And what is the purpose of the

Bible? You'll find it in II Timothy 3:16. Its purpose is to correct us where we are wrong. To reprove us. To reveal to us true doctrine, and correct us where we have accepted false doctrine. Its purpose is to instruct us in truth, in righteousness. To change our minds!

This, right here, is going to be a crucial test for many readers of *The Plain Truth*. Ask yourself: Are you willing to be corrected by God's Word on points where you have been deceived? Remember, the whole world has been deceived! God says so! Read it in Revelation 12:9 and 20:3. A deceived person is one who really and sincerely believes he is right.

Yes, you may be wholly sincere and honest in your conviction, and still have been deceived, and therefore wrong! And if you now reject this knowledge from God's Word, God will reject you! (God says in Hosea 4:6: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of God, I will also forget thy children.”)

Are you able to let God's Word correct you when you have accepted and believed something contrary to the truth? Can you admit that it just might be that you and millions of others may not have been told the whole truth about being born again?

When Christ Was Born Again

Notice again, carefully, Romans 8:29. It is speaking of Christ, the Son of God. It says, plainly, that Jesus Christ was “the firstborn of many brethren.”

This shows that *many brethren* were to be born—but that Christ was the first of these brethren—the first to be so born.

Who are the “brethren”? In Romans 8:12, Paul shows his epistle which we call the book of Romans was addressed to the “brethren.” He says: “Therefore, brethren. . . .” Now to whom is this epistle addressed? Notice Romans 1:7—to those “beloved of God, *called to be saints*.” Paul addresses his letter to

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BORN AGAIN?

(Continued from page 3)

the Corinthians thus: "Unto the church of God . . . to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (I Cor. 1:2). And in verse 10, "Now I beseech you, brethren . . ." The brethren are those who have been converted—under grace—who are saints.

Romans 8:29 says Jesus was born first, before any of these brethren.

Now when was He so born? Is this speaking of His human birth, His first birth of the virgin Mary? Well mark this fact, and mark it well! Jesus was born 33½ years before the Holy Spirit came on that day of Pentecost—before the Church began—before these brethren came under grace. Were any people 34 years old converted, baptized, and put under grace that day—any 35, or 40, or 50? If there was a single one older than 33½, then he was born (as a human) before Jesus. In that case Jesus could not have been the first of these brethren to be born.

This is not speaking of Jesus' first and human birth at Bethlehem. It is speaking of His being born AGAIN—after He was born of the virgin Mary—because many brethren were born (of human birth) before Jesus.

Next consider—since this scripture—Romans 8:29—cannot refer to Jesus' first and human birth at Bethlehem, it must, of necessity, refer to a second birth—to being born again.

Now when was Jesus born again—after His human birth of the virgin Mary? Did Jesus Christ have the same "born-again experience" millions of people profess to have had? Was Jesus Christ a sinner? Did He need, or ever receive, forgiveness of sin? Did He need salvation from sin? I'm sure every person who professes this "born-again experience" will agree the answer is no! A thousand times no!

When the scripture says that Jesus was "the firstborn of many brethren," we have to agree that this birth was not the conversion of a sinner, being put under grace. It was not the same kind of being born again that has been erroneously

taught and so widely accepted!

Yet, since He was the firstborn of many brethren, these many brethren are to be born *as* He was—the *same kind* of new birth!

By process of elimination we have now proved:

1) This birth of Christ in Romans 8:29 was not His first or human birth of the virgin Mary. Therefore it had to be a later birth—a being born AGAIN.

2) It was not the kind of "born-again experience" so commonly professed—not receiving salvation from sin. Yet He was born again!

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3) Therefore, it leaves only one possibility. It was His *spiritual* birth, when He was *born of God*, by His RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD!

When He was born at Bethlehem, as a human, He was born as the Son of man. Continually, through His ministry, He called Himself the "Son of man." But He was born again—born of God by His resurrection, as you read in Romans 1:3-4: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh [His human birth of Mary—making Him the Son of man]; and declared to be the *Son of God* with power, according to the spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead.*"

This scripture speaks of the two births of Jesus Christ. The one of the virgin Mary, a descendant of David, by which He became the Son of man. Then later, He was born

again, this time as the Son of God, by His resurrection from the dead!

In Context

Before leaving this scripture in Romans 8:29, let's notice the theme of the whole chapter—let's be sure we understand it in context.

What is the theme of this chapter? It is generally called "the Holy Spirit chapter." But it is showing how God, by the Holy Spirit, changes us from carnal and sinning humans into, ultimately, sons of God, by the resurrection from the dead. Serving the flesh, we cannot please God (verse 8), but (verse 9) we are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in us.

But (verse 11) if the Holy Spirit dwells in us, even as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, we also shall be resurrected by His Spirit that dwells in us. Read it in your Bible. Even as Christ was born again, born of God, by His resurrection, even so we—the brethren—shall be born again as sons of God, through the resurrection of the dead, by His Spirit that dwells in us!

We, if God's Spirit is in us, are children of God, and heirs. Not yet inheritors—but heirs to inherit, when we are born of God by the resurrection, even the glory which Christ now has. We shall be glorified together (verse 17). The whole creation groans, waiting for the actual manifestation of the sons of God, when we shall be resurrected to glory (verses 18-19). We are waiting for the redemption of our body—by the resurrection (verse 23).

Yes, by the resurrection we are to be conformed to the image (spiritual image) of God's Son Christ, who was the first so born, by the resurrection, of many brethren (verse 29). "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again . . ." (verse 34).

Yes, this chapter is talking of the resurrection, by God's Holy Spirit which dwells in us! That is its theme. Christ was the firstborn of many brethren, through the resurrection. It is plain!

Born Again by a Resurrection

Now notice other scriptures.

Speaking of Christ, "who is the

image of the invisible God, the *first-born of every creature*" (Col. 1:15).

Now notice a plain statement that it is speaking of Christ being the firstborn from the dead, by the resurrection:

"And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the *firstborn from the dead*; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

There it is! Read it with your own eyes in your own Bible. Christ is HEAD of the Church—the first of the brethren in the Church to be born from the dead.

When we are converted, our sins forgiven and we receive the Holy Spirit, we are then *begotten* of God—not yet *born* of God. If this has taken place—if we have been converted, *begotten*—we are, truly, already sons of God (I John 3:2), but what we shall be, when born of God, does not yet appear—for then *we shall be like Him*—like Christ in His resurrected glorified body!

Now turn to the "resurrection chapter"—I Corinthians 15:

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (verse 19). That is, if merely being converted in this life—being forgiven—placed under grace—is all the hope we have—if that is all there is to it—if there is not to be the resurrection to the life to come, then we are of all men most miserable. If "being born again" takes place in this life, then we have no hope for the eternal life to come!

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (verse 20). That is, Christ has been born again—born to a second life—eternal life, becoming the first of many brethren to be so born. He is the first of those who have died to be resurrected—that is, born—to a new and future life.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (verses 22-23). Christ was the first to be born again—born from the dead. Afterward—at His coming—they that are Christ's—the many brethren—

shall be born again from the dead, just as Christ was.

These scriptures are plain. They make plain the fact and the truth that being "born again" is being literally born of God, immortal, by the resurrection.

That does *not* in any way nullify the experience of conversion in this life. It simply means that millions have been deceived into calling that experience by the wrong name. It is a begetting, not a birth. Each of us was begotten in our mother's womb before he was, later, born.

Now notice Acts 26:23: "That

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that dwells in us!

Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead." There it is again. Christ the *firstfruits*—Christ the *first-born* of many brethren—the first to be born by the resurrection from the dead! These are plain statements of Scripture—plain statements from God. They do not say—and I do not say—that Christ was a sinner who needed salvation.

What these plain statements from God's Holy Word do say, is that being born again is not that experience of conversion from sin in this life—it is not anything any human has experienced in this life—it is a new birth to a new life by a resurrection. However, it is also true that no one will be born again—born of God to the new immortal life—unless he repents of sin, believes on Christ and accepts Him as personal Savior, receives the gift of the Holy

Spirit, and then is led by the Spirit of God. But this experience is not a "born-again" experience—it is a begetting!

Are you now willing to believe God's truth? It is so infinitely more precious and glorious than Satan's counterfeits with which he has deceived the world. □

SPACE SHUTTLE

(Continued from page 25)

"Everything about the project is completely conventional. The only breakthrough required is a decision on our part to go ahead."

Space shuttle service? Manufacturing plants operating in outer space? Extraterrestrial power stations beaming energy back to earth? Cosmic colonies? Mankind establishing his dominion in new and unexplored regions of the universe? The era of the high frontier?

For many people, it's a matter of faith in an age-old vision that somewhere beyond the earth's atmosphere there is a better place, a better life, a chance to experience awe, wonder, and an exhilarating freedom from the limitations and frustrations of our present mundane existence. Surely it is a goal worthy of one's lifelong dedication.

Yet the irony—indeed the tragedy—is that modern man seeks to find salvation not through the revelation of his Creator but through his own ingenuity and technological innovation. □

RECOMMENDED READING

The book of Genesis states that God created man in His image and gave man dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26). But the Bible also proclaims that a time will come when man will have a direct part in exploring and even creating new worlds, not just in our solar system, but throughout the vast reaches of God's fantastic universe. If you would like to know more about man's awesome and inspiring destiny, then write for the free booklet *Why Were You Born?* This booklet will give you an amazing and encouraging glimpse into man's incredible human potential.

Personal from...

(Continued from page 1)

between best quality and cheap merchandise? All merchandise comes out of the ground. Quality products are simply those resulting from more careful and conscientious selection of materials, which are made into an object with more thoughtful and more painstaking craftsmanship. Inferior merchandise comes from indifferent selection of materials and less conscientious and careful workmanship. God's way is the quality way!

Is good quality "extravagance"? Many people do not realize the true meaning of the word "extravagance." Webster's definition: "A spending of more than is reasonable or necessary; excessive expenditure; wastefulness." God's quality, then, is NOT extravagance unless it is excessive.

But what if you can't afford the best quality? Then purchase only what you are able—always live within your means—and be satisfied with such as you have. But, be industrious, doing what you do the best you can and, if you really live God's way, in due time He will prosper you so that you can afford better.

Yet never set your heart on physical things. In the quotation from Jesus mentioned above (Mark 10:23-24), it was not the possession of wealth that Jesus said would keep a man out of the Kingdom of God—but the TRUSTING in those riches. Jesus said that we should "beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). David warned us that, when God prospers us, we should be careful not to set our hearts on the prosperity.

Through John, Jesus says: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health" (III John 2). Look at the prosperity of the patriarch Joseph: "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a PROSPEROUS man . . . the Lord made all that he did to prosper . . ." (Genesis 39:2-3). Job was the wealthiest man in the East. After he learned his lesson, God gave him double his original wealth. The

greatest national prosperity was promised by God to the descendants of Abraham if they would diligently follow His way.

Prosperity is not a sin. It is a BLESSING. God is the giver of abundance and prosperity. But carnal man usually sets his heart on the wealth, instead of on serving God. He makes it an idol in which he trusts. That is the sin.

It is God's will that we prosper, be obedient to Him, with our hearts set on Him, relying solely on Him. Then when we prosper—when God gives abundance of good things, of

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good quality—He wants us to be appreciative, grateful, give Him thanks, and enjoy what He has blessed us with, all the while trusting and worshiping Him and realizing we shall have the material things but a short time.

One businessman whom God had blessed with a very nice home well furnished with good-quality things put it this way: "My attitude toward my home is like it was when I was assigned to a very fine hotel room for the night. I said: 'I will enjoy it these few fleeting moments, give God thanks, be appreciative, try to use it as facilities for serving God, obtain a good night's rest, and then leave it and go on my way in the morning, never looking back with any regrets at leaving it.' That's my attitude toward my very nice home. If I had to leave it forever tomorrow morning, there would be no regrets—just thanksgiving that God let me enjoy it for the little time I had it. This life doesn't last long—and we soon leave everything in it. I'm merely a transient sojourner here, looking forward to something more real and permanent in God's Kingdom."

But what about one who never had this understanding of how to view material things—and now, at

middle age or older, realizes what has been lost? It may be no fault of the person at all. But everyone should do all he can, from the time he awakens to this truth. Forget the past. Begin where you are, and start living God's way!

What about good manners and proper attire?

There is much sophisticated "culture" in this world that is pure snobbery and vanity. But TRUE culture is based on God's great law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." That part of culture and good manners which expresses concern for one's neighbor in politeness, graciousness, pleasantness, smiles and service is true culture.

What about dress? Yes, one should dress according to the occasion, and also within reason—according to his pocketbook. On our Ambassador College campus, during work hours, students dress in the proper work clothes for the job. During classes, they do not "dress up," but men often come in shirt sleeves and open collars—yet clean, neat and orderly. For an evening function, they dress up in whatever is their best—and if they cannot afford better than they have, that's quite all right.

But for a wedding or graduation exercises, they should dress properly—in the best they have. Is that being "stuck up"? Never! Jesus gave a parable picturing the wedding between Himself and His Church. The king in this parable is God, and his son is Jesus Christ. Notice:

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness" (Matthew 22:11-13).

The Bible teaches the principle of proper attire according to the occasion. Bodily apparel is also used in the Bible to symbolize character. There is a kind of pride that is NOT vanity, but rather concern for others and respect toward God. That kind of pride we should have. □