

The Astounding TRUTH about EASTER

Here are the amazing FACTS that have been hidden for centuries. Here are the shocking revelations of authentic history and the Bible!

BELIEVE it or not, Easter was being observed 4000 years ago! It was still being observed when the Christ-child was born—during His ministry—when He built His Church—*yet Christ did not institute it—Christ never observed it—the Apostles never observed it—the Church JESUS BUILT never observed it—the Apostle Paul commanded the Gentile-born Christians to cease observing it. More startling, CHRIST commands us, today, to cease observing it!*

HOW, then, did Easter—now revealed as an ancient pagan custom of IDOL WORSHIP—get into the Christianity of the Western world?

And DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE?

Listen! *Your eternity* may depend on the answer! Here are the authentic facts of history. Here is God's word to *you—whether it makes any difference* what YOU believe—or what YOU do about it!

God has commissioned me: "Cry aloud, and spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgressions." Write for my two eye-opening booklets, "EASTER," and "RESURRECTION."

This article by Herman L. Hoeh reveals, for the first time, many additional facts of history—almost unbelievable, startling, yet TRUE, authentic *facts of history*. You can verify them at public libraries. YOU are soon—very soon—going to stand before the judgment bar of Christ! Don't say carelessly: "Well, here's the way *I* look at it"; or, "I don't think it makes any difference." God says it makes a difference. God says there is a way that *seems right* to a man—to YOU—but the end thereof are the ways of death! You will be judged by WHAT GOD SAYS—not by what you think! God says this whole world today is DECEIVED! Now read what history says—what GOD says!

—Herbert W. Armstrong

by Herman L. Hoeh

EASTER was observed 4000 years ago among the pagans!—but you can't find one word in the entire Bible that Jesus or the apostles ever observed it!

Where did you ever find in your Bible that Peter and Paul held Easter sunrise services? that the early Christian women in apostolic days dressed up for an Easter parade? that Christians baked hot cross buns? that the children of Christians dyed Easter eggs and ate chocolate Easter rabbits in honor of Christ's resurrection?

You NEVER found these practices taught by the inspired apostolic Church, did you?—*yet* these very customs WERE BEING CELEBRATED IN PAGAN LANDS long before apostolic days!

Origin of Easter Sunday

In The PLAIN TRUTH one year ago we gave *proof from Scripture* that the resurrection of Jesus Christ did *not* occur on Sunday morning! If you did not read this amazing, factual PROOF, then write Mr. Armstrong immediately for the FREE booklet "The Resurrection was NOT on Sunday." You will receive the shock of your life if you have not un-

derstood this absolutely proved fact before.

Seven irrefutable historical facts demonstrate that the resurrection was not on Sunday and that the crucifixion was not on "Good Friday," that Jesus was actually dead three days and three nights as He said He would be!

Then when did the celebration of Easter Sunday enter the Church calendar?

Here is what Kurtz's *Church History* states about Easter: "The Saxon name Easter is derived from the old German festival of Ostara, the goddess of spring, which was *celebrated at the same season*" (Vol. I. p. 356).

"The English *Easter*, Anglo-Saxon *Oster*, German *Ostern*, is at all events connected with the *East* and sunrise . . ." says the Protestant historian Schaff, who continued to write that "the transfer of the celebration of Ostara . . . to the Christian Easter festival" took place years after the death of Paul. (From a footnote in Schaff's *History of the Church*, Vol. I, p. 373.)

Easter came from pagan sun worship, not from Jesus Christ or the apostles.

About 600 years before Christ, the

prophet Ezekiel saw, in vision, an Easter celebration! Notice it, in Ezekiel, chapter 8, verses 12-17: "Then He (God) brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat the women weeping for Tammuz."

What GOD Says about Easter Sunrise Service

What Ezekiel saw here in vision is a prophecy for today!—for the House of Israel—Great Britain and America. And our professing Christian people are practicing this very ABOMINATION today as our ancestors did centuries before Christ.

Do you know *why* those women were weeping for Tammuz? Here is the answer:

Tammuz was the heathen messiah—the false Christ of the pagans who rose on Sunday morning. They observed Lent just as many churches observe it today, with *weeping* on "Good Friday" and *rejoicing* on Easter Sunday morning! God calls this an ABOMINATION!

"Among the Pagans this *Lent* seems to have been an indispensable preliminary to the *great annual festival* in

commemoration of the death and resurrection of Tammuz, which was celebrated by alternate weeping and rejoicing." (Hislop's *Two Babylons*, p. 105.)

But notice further: "Then said He unto me (God is speaking to Ezekiel): 'Hast thou seen this, O son of man? thou shalt again see yet greater abominations than these.' And He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, AND THEIR FACES TOWARD THE EAST; AND THEY WORSHIPPED THE SUN TOWARD THE EAST."

Notice this terrible abomination which Ezekiel saw—the Easter sunrise service—pictured on the opposite page. This is what professing Christians are doing today—celebrating pagan customs on Easter Sunday supposedly in honor of Christ, who did not rise from the dead on Sunday at all!

Jesus Christ Forbids Easter Celebrations

Surely the people today are sincere—but so were the pagans!—*they didn't know better*. Observe what God says He will do to those who refuse to repent of this abomination: "Is it a light thing . . . that they commit the ABOMINATIONS which they commit here? . . . Therefore will I deal IN FURY: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice"—of course they pray to God—"yet will I not hear them!" (Ezek. 8:15-18).

But what if Easter is an ancient pagan festival. Isn't it still all right, if we use it to honor CHRIST? That's the way people reason today. Let GOD answer that question:

Jesus Christ—the Word of God—spoke to Moses to warn the people not to follow these customs of the heathen. Here is what Jesus Christ said: "Take heed . . . that thou inquire not after their gods, saying: 'How used these nations to serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.' THOU SHALT NOT DO SO UNTO THE ETERNAL THY GOD; FOR EVERY ABOMINATION TO THE ETERNAL, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods" (Deut. 12:30-31).

Here is what God says—it doesn't matter what we think—but it DOES MATTER what God thinks. He calls these pagan Easter customs *abominations*. No wonder the apostles did not teach the early spirit-filled New Testament Church of God to observe these traditions of men!

Is it any wonder that Jeremiah was inspired to write: "Learn not the way of the heathen . . . for the customs of the people are vain"? (Jer. 10:2).

Jesus left us an example of what we ought to do—and that example is not Easter!

Catholics Testify to the Origin of Easter

Since Easter Sunday was derived by Protestants from the Catholic Church, it is to the Catholic Church that we must turn for testimony regarding the origin of Easter. Here is their testimony—and they should know—they introduced it!

The Catholic scholar Hefele writes concerning Easter: "All the Churches of the West, the South, and the North, had adopted this practice"—celebrating Easter—"particularly Rome, the whole of Italy, Africa, Egypt, Spain, Gaul [France], Britain, Lybia, Achaia [Greece]; it has even been adopted in the dioceses of Asia, Pontus, and Cilicia." (From *History of the Councils*, pp. 306-307 of Vol. I.)

Notice that Easter celebrations were adopted—not from the Bible, but from the heathen, long after the death of Jesus Christ!

But from what sources did the scholar Hefele obtain this information?

He obtained it from ancient church history written shortly after the time Easter was adopted! Here is what Socrates Scholasticus wrote in his *Ecclesiastical History* not long after Emperor Constantine, in the 4th century:

"Neither the apostles, therefore, nor the Gospels, have anywhere imposed . . . Easter . . . Wherefore, inasmuch as men love festivals, because they afford them cessation from labor: each individual in every place, according to his own pleasure, has by a prevalent custom celebrated [Easter] . . . The Saviour and his apostles have enjoined us by no law to keep this feast . . . just as many other customs have been established in individual localities according to usage, so also the feast of Easter CAME TO BE OBSERVED IN EACH PLACE ACCORDING TO THE INDIVIDUAL PECULIARITIES OF THE PEOPLES inasmuch as none of the apostles legislated on the matter. And that the observance originated not by legislation, BUT AS A CUSTOM the facts themselves indicate" (chapter 22).

So says the ancient Catholic historian in the 4th century.

He continues to show that the Lenten fasts prior to Easter, celebrated among the pagans, were also observed by differing customs among the professing Christians.

These divergent customs surrounding Easter originated through "ignorance," says Hefele—ignorance of the Bible!

"And this diversity among the observers [of Lent and Easter] had not its origin in our time," wrote Irenaeus at the close of the second century, "but

long before in that of our predecessors, some of whom probably, being not very accurate in their observance of it, handed down to posterity the custom as it had, through simplicity or *private fancy*, been [introduced among them]. (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, p. 568, Vol. I.)

Now let us understand exactly how Easter was introduced.

The First Historical Records

The early Church of God in New Testament times was taught that Jesus was in the grave three days and three nights—that He arose at the close of the third day after the crucifixion. The crucifixion occurred upon a Wednesday, April 25, 31 A.D. This historical date of the passover is demonstrated by seven irrefutable proofs which we published in *The PLAIN TRUTH* two years ago. Thursday, in 31 A.D., was an annual sabbath. This is demonstrated from the Bible in Mr. Armstrong's FREE booklet on the "Resurrection," already mentioned.

The practice of the New Testament Church of God was to observe an annual memorial of the death of Jesus Christ. This memorial was called the *passover*—commonly misnamed the "Lord's Supper." There is not sufficient space in this article to mention the many scriptures which clarify this little-understood practice of the apostles (I Cor. 5:7-8).

If you want the proof, write for the FREE booklet "*How often should we partake of the LORD'S SUPPER?*" which explains the New Testament practice in entirety.

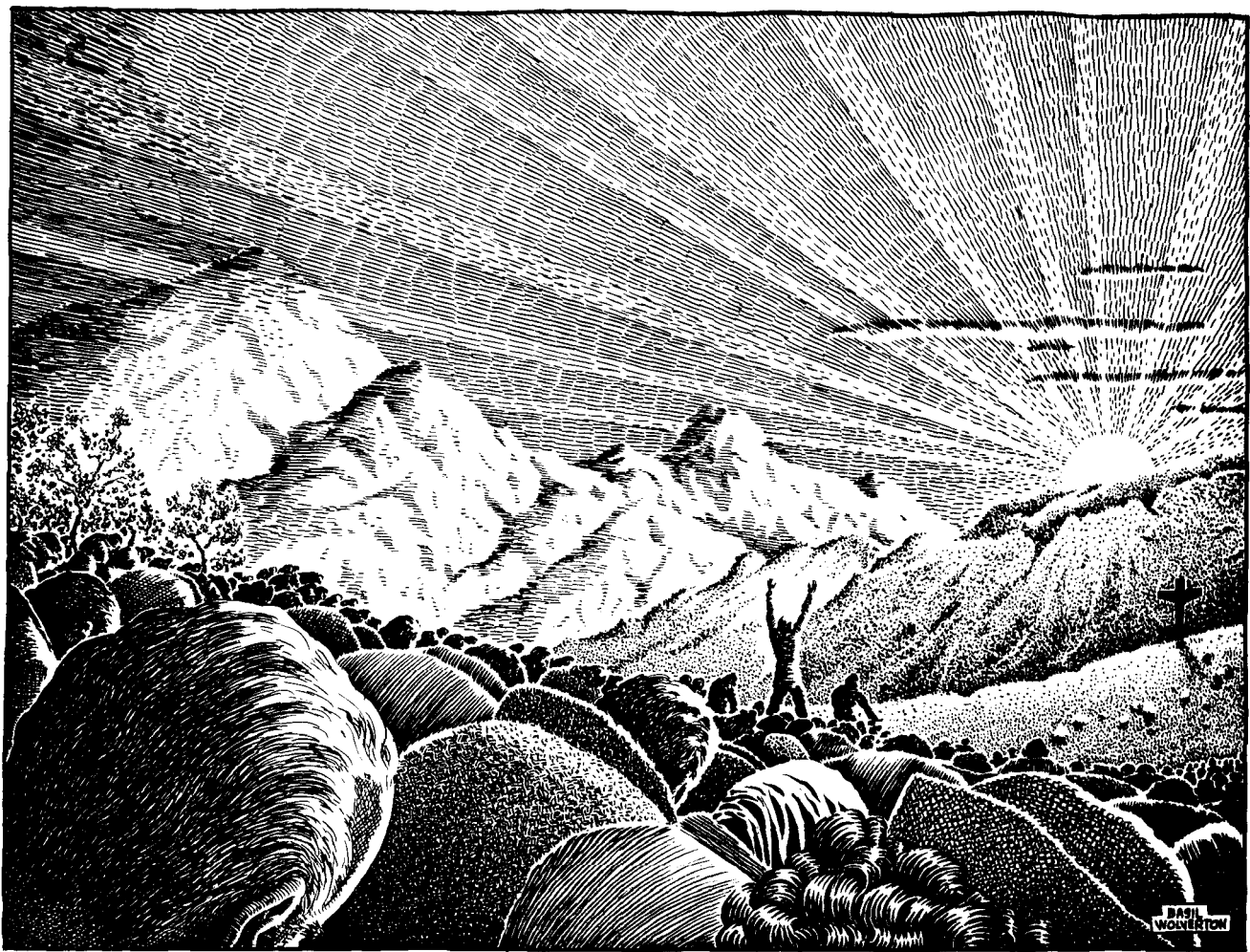
The *Passover* was observed annually, on the eve of Christ's death, on Nisan 14 of God's Sacred Calendar. You can find this information in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, or even in the "World Almanac" in your town Library. This New Testament practice was followed universally until shortly after the death of the apostle John.

Here is what happened!

A calendar change occurred in 104 A.D., after which *new ideas* began to be introduced into the Church. The Christians who fled Jerusalem in 69 A.D. "continued to use the Jewish cycle"—*God's method of reckoning the passover* in the sacred calendar—"till the bishops of Jerusalem who were of the circumcision were succeeded by others who were not of the circumcision"—unconverted Gentiles—and ". . . they began to invent other cycles" (p. 1152 of Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*).

Yes, Easter began as the *invention* of men—who exchanged the God-given paschal festival for the pagan Easter Sunday.

This same author continues: "We see, at this time the Jewish calcula-



HERE is an Easter sunrise service. Ceremonies like this, in which people bow to the east, to the *rising sun*, were practiced among the pagans 2,000 years before Jesus Christ was born (Ezekiel 8:16).

Jesus Christ was *not* resurrected on Sun-day morning. A sunrise service comes from rank pagan IDOLATRY. God calls the sunrise service an ABOMINATION!—SUN-WORSHIP! It is a SIN to bow to the sun in worshipping the CREATOR.

Notice the cross—the pagans used the cross as a symbol of the *false* Messiah, Tammuz. They bowed to the cross—an *idolatrous* symbol. God FORBIDS these IDOLATROUS PRACTICES in His Worship.

It *does* make a difference to God! He labels EASTER exactly what it is—a PAGAN festival!

Your eternal destiny depends upon what God SAYS, not what *seems right* to you. It is time this nation *repented* of this ABOMINABLE IDOLATRY.

tion"—God's inspired method of determining the passover which the Jews had accurately preserved—"was generally *rejected by the . . . church*, and yet no certain one agreed upon in its room . . ."

This is how the passover—incorrectly called Lord's Supper or Eucharist—was gradually *rejected*.

The Lord's Supper on Saturday!

Remember that up to this point the churches of God universally understood that Jesus rose after three days—on Saturday evening shortly before sunset.

Many now began to do what *seemed* right to them. Not only did many begin to miscalculate the annual occurrence of the Passover, *but they began to observe the passover weekly on Saturday*, the Sabbath, believe it or not! Here is the proof:

For over 200 years this custom was a universal practice of the apostatizing

churches! The Catholic church historian, Socrates, wrote: "While therefore some in Asia Minor observed the day above-mentioned"—he means that some faithfully observed the passover on the 14th of Nisan as the apostles did—"others in the East kept THIS FEAST ON THE SABBATH INDEED . . ." By "sabbath" all early writers meant Saturday!

So universal was the custom of observing the "Lord's Supper" on Saturday that he continued to write: "For although *almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the sabbath of every week*, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, *have ceased to do this*." You may find this amazing testimony in Vol. 2 of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 131-132, from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates, book V, chapter 22.

Did you catch the *real significance* of this quotation?

The passover was transformed by false teachers from an annual memorial in memory of the *death* of Christ into a weekly memorial in honor of His *resurrection*, which occurred on Saturday. These weekly "passovers" were called the "sacred mysteries"! What did Paul say about the sacred mysteries?

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come"—the day of Christ's return—"except there come a falling away first"—an apostasy, a falling into error. "For the MYSTERY OF INIQUITY *doth already work*" (II Thess. 2:3, 7). The practices of the pagan *sacred mysteries* were already creeping into the local congregations of the Church of God in Paul's day. A part of those ancient mysteries was the festival of Easter!

But Easter did not enter suddenly. It entered slowly, under the pretext of being a Christian custom.

Though many faithful were still ob-

and Hyginus, and Telesphorus, and Xystus. They neither observed it"—the true passover on the 14th of Nisan"—*"nor did they permit those after them to do so."*

Who were these men?—bishops of the church at Rome! Here is the first record, by a Catholic, of the fact that the Roman bishops no longer observed the passover on the correct God-given time, but *on a Sunday!*

It was bishop Xystus (his name is also spelled *Sixtus*) who was the *first* recorded individual to *prevent* the proper observance of the passover, and to celebrate the sacred mysteries annually on a Sunday. Irenaeus speaks further of him, declaring that his doctrine was in direct "opposition" to the practice of the remainder of the churches. Bishop Sixtus was living at the *beginning of the second century*, just after the apostle John died.

Here you have the astounding origin of Easter Sunday in the churches. Together with this practice, the "sacred

mysteries" were also observed every Sunday!

The Romans Divided

The introduction of this custom naturally *divided* the Christians at Rome. The Catholic historian, Abbé Duchesne, wrote: "There were many Christians of Asia in Rome at that time"—remember that the Church of God at Rome was founded by those who came from Asia Minor where Paul preached—"and the very early Popes, Xystus and Telesphorus, saw them every year keep their Pasch"—the true passover—"the same day as did the Jews. They maintained that was correct. It was allowed to pass . . . though the rest of Rome observed a different use" (Vol. I, p. 210, of *The Early History of the Church*).

I know these are startling facts, but they are true! It is time we knew about them!

Irenaeus wrote even more regarding the observance of Easter at Rome and elsewhere as follows: "But Polycarp (*Please continue on page 16*)

servicing the practices of the original, true church, many congregations began to hold the "sacred mysteries" every Saturday to honor, as they thought, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But how were the false teachers going to alter the knowledge that Jesus was three days and three nights in the tomb?

"Good Friday-Easter Sunday" Tradition

Let's notice! From the *Syriac Didascalia*, composed shortly before the time of Constantine, we have a record of what happened in those early days. False teachers began to interpret the three days and three nights in the following clever fashion:

They claimed Jesus suffered on the cross, supposedly on Friday, for about six hours. The daylight hours from nine in the morning to noon they counted as one day. The hours from noon to three o'clock—when the land was darkened—they reckoned as the first night. Then the time from three o'clock to sunset was reckoned as the second day. Friday night to Saturday morning became the second night; the daylight of Saturday, the third day; and Saturday night to Sunday morning, the third night!

A very clever argument—and it *deceived* a great many people! Those false ministers twisted the truth that Jesus was IN THE GRAVE three days and three nights.

For the first time the idea of a Sunday resurrection was injected into the churches. Now observe what happened.

Easter Sunday Begins at Rome

In commenting on those who did *not* observe the passover in accordance with the practice of the apostles, Irenaeus, a Catholic living toward the close of the second century wrote to bishop Victor of Rome, "We mean Anicetus, and Pius,

Truth About EASTER

(Continued from page 6)

also was not only instructed by the apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church of Smyrna . . . He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus"—bishop of Rome around 154 A.D.—"caused many to turn away from the . . . heretics to the *Church of God*, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles . . ." While at Rome, Polycarp discussed the matter of Easter with the Roman bishop.

Irenaeus continued: "For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe it"—the passover—"because he had always observed it with John the disciple of our Lord, and the rest of the apostles, with whom he associated; and neither did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it, who said that he was bound to follow the customs of the presbyters before him" (Quoted from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, book V, chap. 24, in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1).

Notice that bishop Anicetus had no scriptural grounds—he determined to follow the "customs" of men!—Easter Sunday!

A Fake Vision from God

Shortly after Polycarp left, there appeared an amazing letter—said by many scholars to have been a deliberate forgery. This letter states: "Pope Pius, who lived about 147, had made a decree, That the annual solemnity of the *Pasch* [*Pasch* is the Greek word for *Passover*] should be kept only on the Lord's day"—Sunday—and in confirmation of this he pretended, that Hermes, his brother, who was then an eminent teacher among them, had received instruction from an angel, who commanded that all men should keep the *Pasch* on the Lord's day." (From pp. 1148-1149 of Bingham's *Antiquities* of the Christian Church.)

Of this same hoax we read in *Apostolical Fathers*, by Donaldson, p. 324,

"One of the letters forged in the name of Pius, where one Hermas is mentioned as the author; and it is stated that in his book a commandment was given through an angel to observe the Passover on a Sunday."

If this letter was a deliberate forgery, it was invented after Polycarp's time in an effort to lend weight to the custom of Anicetus, bishop of Rome, who maintained the Sunday observance of the eucharist or passover. If it were not a forgery, then Pius himself was the author of this deceptive letter. (Pius died just prior to the visit of Polycarp to Rome.)

But the Easter controversy did not end here!

Within 35 years it broke out vehemently between Polycrates of Asia Minor and Victor of Rome, who attempted to "cut off whole churches of God, who observed the tradition of an ancient custom"—the true passover.

Here is a part of the forthright answer given by Polycrates to Victor, vindicating the truth of God:

"As for us, then, we scrupulously observe the exact day, neither adding nor taking away. For in Asia great luminaries have gone to their rest, who shall rise again in the day of the coming of the Lord . . . I speak of Philip, one of the twelve apostles . . . John, moreover, who reclined on the Lord's bosom . . . Then there is Polycarp . . . THESE ALL KEPT THE PASSOVER ON THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOSPEL, WITHOUT EVER DEVIATING FROM IT, BUT KEEPING TO THE RULE OF FAITH."

This remarkable letter is preserved in Vol. 8 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 773-774.

Polycrates came from that area in which Paul spent most of his time—in Asia Minor, near Ephesus. This is also where John spent his last days. Here we have many Christians still remaining true to the faith!

Here is proof that both the apostles to the circumcision and Paul, the special apostle to the Gentiles, taught the ob-

servance of the passover on the 14th of the first month of God's sacred calendar. Chrysostom, who wrote several centuries after the apostles admitted that "formerly it [the passover] prevailed also at Antioch" from where Paul began many of his apostolic journeys.

Now, what happened to stamp out the true observance of the passover from the popular churches?

Constantine—the Man of Power

Constantine then convoked the first general council of the Christian-professing world. The Council of Nicaea decided, under his authority, that Easter *must* be celebrated on Sunday and that the passover must be forbidden!

Without regard to these decisions, many continued faithful. For this reason Constantine issued an edict declaring: "We have directed, accordingly, that you be deprived of all houses in which you are accustomed to hold your assemblies . . . public or private." (From the *Life of Constantine*, book III.)

Easter Still Observed on Different Sundays

Though everyone was now forced to observe Easter or flee the confines of the Roman Empire, the churches were still divided over the exact Sunday for Easter. Here is how confusing matters became:

"But notwithstanding any endeavours that could be used then, or afterwards, there remained great differences in the church about it for many ages. For the churches of *Great Britain and Ireland* did not accord with the Roman church in keeping Easter on the same Sunday, till about the year 800. Nor was the Roman way fully received in France, till it was settled there by the authority of Charles the Great . . ." (p. 1151).

I know these are startling facts—but they ought to make you wake up to the TRUTH! It is high time we learned exactly what has happened to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the practices of the New Testament Church of God these past 1900 years!