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**COVER:** A child, rice-ball in hand, in Nagasaki the day after the bombing. In addition to the physical toll the bomb exacted, the psychological effects were numerous and are now coming under closer scrutiny. See p. 296. (Photograph by YAMAHATA Yosuke from *Hiroshima-Nagasaki: A Pictorial Record of the Atomic Destruction*)

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# LETTERS

## Shroud clarification

I am a member of the team of scientists that performed the scientific tests on the Shroud of Turin in 1978. I recently returned from the conference in New London, Conn., where the scientists, for the first time, publicly presented all the test results and the conclusions that can be drawn from an examination of those collective results. Having just read Dietrick Thomsen's commentary on the Turin Shroud (SN: 10/3/81, p. 211), I felt I should add some comments to clarify the situation.

First, although author Stevenson was with the scientific team in Turin, the conclusions drawn by him and his co-author Habermas are their own, and are based on their personal interpretation of the results. The consensus of the scientists, as presented in New London, is that the image is not caused by a scorch, but is visible because of increased dehydration and oxidation of the surface fibers in the image area. Results of tests on the Shroud areas scorched in a fire in 1532, and on laboratory scorched linen samples, showed marked dissimilarities between lightly scorched linen and the Shroud image area, including enhanced UV fluorescence of scorched fibers and total fiber discoloration of scorched fibers (as opposed to the surface discoloration for image area fibers).

Second, it was never the intent of the scientists to answer the theological questions posed by the Shroud, but rather to simply gather, reduce and analyze all the scientific data possible regarding the physical and chemical nature of the Shroud. In the words of Dr. Alan Adler, one of the scientists who did the analysis on the microscopic surface samples taken from the Shroud, "we can test for blood, or we can test for paint pigment ... but science doesn't have a test for Jesus Christ!"

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## Life-saving birth records

The case of Jim George (SN: 10/17/81, p. 249) is, unfortunately, not unique. In New York state, too, an adoptee who needed lifesaving bone marrow from a blood relative donor was refused access to his adoption records and true birth certificate from which he could have established the identity of his biological parents.

In addition to Missouri and New York, there are still many other states that ban the opening of birth records once adoption is completed. But the issue of opening up sealed adoption records to adult adoptees, as well as to birth parents, is currently being pursued vigorously from several directions.

The Adoptees' Liberty Movement Associa-

tion (ALMA) recently filed a civil action suit against the state of California, seeking to overturn a 70-year-old law barring disclosure of adoption information without a court order. Cyril C. Means Jr., professor of constitutional law at New York Law School, who favors the unsealing of adoption records, is one of the attorneys in the above case. He believes that the best avenue of constitutional redress is in the 13th Amendment. In his petition in the California case he writes: "In no other instance in the law, apart from slavery, is a person held subject as an adult to a contract to which he was never a party. The adoptee has been treated as a chattel and sold as a slave. The infant cannot be regarded as a party to the [adoption] contract." He also cites Finland, Great Britain and Scotland, where an adult adoptee is automatically entitled to know who his or her parents are.

In May 1981 the General Assembly of the Northern Wing of the U.S. Presbyterian Church adopted a resolution ("Overture") recognizing the right of adoptees to knowledge of their origins by allowing them access, upon reaching the age of majority, to their original birth certificates, court and agency records. The same rights, according to this resolution, also apply to the biological parents of the adoptees.

Initially adoption agencies, in general, fought hard to protect the principle of sealed records. However, there is evidence that some agencies are now refocusing their views as a result of the general changes in social mores over the past two decades, changes which brought with them a new openness in the adoption process. The Children's Home Society of California, for instance, a pioneer agency in adoption services and the largest private adoption agency in that state, has modified its position concerning sealed adoption records. In March 1981 its Board of Directors approved a resolution advocating a modification of current agency practices and as being in favor of a policy of open adoption records.

It is interesting to note that according to the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, adult adoptees with Indian blood have the right to obtain their adoption papers and true birth certificates, but there is as yet no such federal provision for whites or blacks.

Alex Haley articulated most eloquently, in his book *Roots*, the inner pressures for the search of one's origins. He wrote: "In all of us there is a hunger, marrow deep, to know our heritage, to know who we are, and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is a vacuum, an emptiness, and a most disquieting loneliness." This hunger is doubly painful and constantly throbbing in the hearts and minds of adoptees.

Zellig Bach, Ed.D.  
Caldwell, N.J.

*Correction: The article "Deep heat in Oregon" (SN: 10/10/81, p. 238) should have referred to the United States Geological Survey's study of the hottest geothermal temperatures in Oregon, rather than in the country.*

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