

HIS

Nature

“But,” he said, “you cannot see my face,
for no one may see me and live.”
EXODUS 33:20

ISSUE

14

THE FACE OF GOD

On the morning of July 16, 1945, the first atomic bomb was detonated in the Jornada del Muerto (Journey of Death) desert near Alamogordo, New Mexico—a test code-named “Trinity.” The amount of plutonium in the Trinity device came to just under 14 pounds (six kilograms) and was roughly the size of a small orange. The atomic explosion briefly heated the surrounding air to a staggering 20 million degrees Fahrenheit—equivalent to the sun’s interior temperature. It also produced pressures greater than those at the center of the earth! The Trinity bomb was so powerful that it instantly vaporized the 100-foot steel tower upon which it was sitting.

Virtually all of an atom’s potential energy rests in its nucleus and is of a magnitude far beyond what we experience in everyday life. The energy released in the splitting of a uranium atom is 50 million times greater than that produced by the combustion of a carbon atom when wood is burned.



Trinity Nuclear
Explosion

Here’s another way of looking at this: for a nuclear-powered submarine, the energy obtained from a piece of uranium about the size of a golf ball equals one million gallons of gasoline!

There are 92 different elements that Christ Jesus has fashioned. But only the most massive atoms, like uranium or plutonium, will allow a tiny portion of their nucleus to be converted into energy.

We could think of uranium’s nucleus—with its 235 protons and neutrons—as a very tall stack of books. The centers of big atoms are

continued...

generally unsteady. Shoot a neutron at uranium, and “the stack comes tumbling down.” In reality, the uranium nucleus breaks (fissions) in two, releasing enormous energy and freeing some of its neutrons. These released neutrons cause other uranium atoms to split, creating a chain reaction.

This is the principle behind atomic energy. The basic difference between a nuclear power plant and an atom bomb is a matter of control. In a nuclear power plant, metal rods made of cadmium or boron are inserted into uranium or plutonium fuel to absorb neutrons and thus dampen the chain reaction. An A-bomb has no such safety mechanisms. The detonation of an atomic bomb results in the rapid splitting of trillions upon trillions of atoms all at once with the release of immense energy in the form of an explosion.

What would it be like to sit on top of an atomic bomb when it went off and be untouched by its searing heat? Think about it—you’re staring into the consuming face of a nuclear monster. Then everything around you disappears in a flash of blinding light, yet you don’t even suffer a mild sunburn! Sound impossible? Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood in the heart of Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace (Daniel 3), a day is coming when everyone will be exposed to the

holiness of God. Those clothed in the righteousness of Jesus will experience the unspeakable joy of his dazzling appearance without harm (Psalm 17:15), perfectly safe in Christ! Those who choose to come before him, naked in their sin and with no protection, will suffer eternal disaster (Psalm 21:9).

For the most part, nuclear fission has been “kind” to us, and in this way it shows us God’s provision as Creator. Many governments have been able to tap into its unbelievable energy resources to power their cities. But trying to contain nuclear energy carries with it risks—risks that have become all too real at the power plants near Chernobyl, Ukraine, and Fukushima, Japan!

This great thing called nuclear energy is a mere spark of God’s infinite power and glory (Job 26:14). Our Lord’s face is a source of unimaginable beauty . . . and terror. Our God is merciful, patient, full of goodness, and slow to anger. He is also just, righteous, and holy. And, except for our Lord Jesus Christ, we would be unable to bear his presence. How will you stand?

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Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.