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Forging a Superpower

German industry is building the machinery for world war—again.

- Brad Macdonald en Josué Michels
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Germany is an industrial heavyweight, more powerful than Russia, India and the United Kingdom. Its economy almost single-handedly keeps the European Union from going bust. But in military prowess, Germany is a lightweight.

At the end of 2017, the “Bundeswehr had 128 Eurofighters, of which 39 could fly,” the *Spectator* reported. “It had six submarines, none of which were working when the [February 2018 Defense Ministry] report was compiled. Of its 13 aging frigates, only five could sail. Of its 93 Tornado jets, 26 were ready for action. German Air Force trainees struggled to qualify because so few aircraft were ready for use” (June 16, 2018). This isn’t merely an issue of decrepit subs and broken jets. Germany’s army, the Bundeswehr, is woefully undermanned and in need of thousands of soldiers, officers and administrators.

Despite this bleak picture, the *Trumpet* expects Germany to soon transfigure into a terrifying military power that will spark another world war.

This is what the Bible forecasts. And improbable as it may seem, this transformation could happen much more easily and rapidly than most people know!

How? Ultimately it will come down to two key ingredients: industrial capacity and will. Germany already has plenty of the first. It is the world’s *fourth-largest industrial power* and *third-largest exporter*. German-made products, from cars to machinery to chemicals and pharmaceuticals, dominate global markets. Germany’s landscape, as anyone who has driven on the Autobahn knows, is a land of factories and cathedrals. Germany already manufactures masses of *military products* it sells all over the world.

Germany *has* the industrial capacity. It only needs the willpower, the incentive—and it could transform militarily from dwarf to formidable giant virtually overnight!

Why isn’t Germany more of a military heavyweight already? First, its power isn’t nearly as weak as many say. Second—and this is critical, given the nation’s history—the military is an exceedingly complex and sensitive topic, both domestically and internationally. Germany cannot simply build a powerful military. Until the last 10 to 15 years, the Bundeswehr couldn’t fire up a tank without being accused of starting World War III.

Germany has to be very careful with how it shapes its military identity. Since the nation reunited in 1990, the costs to its reputation, economy and politics simply haven’t justified the expense of putting on serious military muscle.

But times have changed. The *incentive* to militarize is intensifying—and Germany is positioned to quickly become a military heavyweight!

Illustrious Military Legacy

Understanding Germany's military requires historical context. While every race and nation has a long history with war and conflict, the Germans have a unique penchant for combat. This history can be traced all the way back to their forefather Asshur and the ancient Assyrians in Mesopotamia. But that is a story for another day.

The first to unite most of Europe's Germanic tribes on a large scale was Charlemagne, the eighth-century French-German emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Less than a century later, the German war machine was operational again, this time under Otto the Great. His kingdom is referred to as the Holy Roman Empire of the *German* nation. Over the next thousand years, the land between the North Sea and the Adriatic Sea was some of the most war-torn territory in the world. The Thirty Years War (1618–48), for example, which began as a Catholic-versus-Protestant conflict but gradually engulfed most of Europe, caused the deaths of more than 8 million people and reduced the German population by 20 percent.

Even modern Germany was conceived in the crucible of war. At the start of the 19th century, Germany was divided into 300 duchies. Then Otto von Bismarck arrived, and by 1871 he had united these states under Prussian leadership. How did he do it? He picked a fight with the French. The Franco-Prussian War (1870–71) was the glue that united Germany.

Less than 20 years after Bismarck died, Germany again went to war. In 1914, Kaiser Wilhelm started the First World War by manipulating Austria-Hungary into conflict with Serbia (and its ally Russia). Germany was defeated. Within 20 years, Adolf Hitler plunged Germany, and much of the rest of the world, into another terrible war. Germany was again vanquished.

The sheer destruction of World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust slowed the German war machine. But over time, Germany's military identity reformed. In the early 1990s, the newly unified German state, together with the Vatican, sparked the Balkans wars.

'Fertile in Military Surprises'

Time and again Germany has shown a proclivity for subterfuge and deceit over its military capacity and ambitions. At the time Hitler took power in 1933, most Western leaders considered him a peaceful leader seeking only to strengthen his nation's position in Europe. When war erupted in September 1939, many were shocked by the sheer scale of Germany's military strength. In just a few years the nation had quietly but not secretly transformed from a hollowed-out power to a military giant, and most of the world had scarcely noticed.

Winston Churchill was one of the few men watching closely; he understood Germany's capacity for deceit. In a speech on Nov. 28, 1934, he warned about its growing air power. "So far I have dealt with what I believe is the known, *but beyond the known there is also the unknown*. We hear from all sides of an air development in Germany far in excess of anything which I have stated today. As to that all I would say is, 'BEWARE!' GERMANY IS A COUNTRY FERTILE IN MILITARY SURPRISES"

Poland was one of the first to experience firsthand the truth in Churchill's warning when, in September 1939, it was crushed under its martial assault. Poland's famed cavalry was no match for Germany's tanks. Next came France—conquered on June 25, 1940, after a mere six weeks of resistance. When the Luftwaffe began bombing London in September 1940, its 2,682 planes outnumbered the Royal Air Force nearly 4 to 1. Were it not for Churchill's inspired leadership and a series of divine miracles, Britain would have been defeated in 1941.

Remarkably, Hitler was able to build his massive navy, air force and army without Britain, France and America really knowing until it was too late. Virtually the entire world slumbered as Germany prepared for war!

Could this history repeat itself?

Many of the best and brightest men in the West certainly believed it could. This is why Allied leaders gathered in Germany in 1945 and forged the Potsdam Agreement. This agreement demanded "the complete disarmament and demilitarization of Germany and the elimination or control of all German industry that could be used for military production."

These men recognized the deadly axis between Adolf Hitler and German industry. The Potsdam Agreement curbed Germany's industrial might, thereby preventing it from building another war machine. But the effort soon failed and within a few years the war factories were again thriving.

In the fall of 1950, Konrad Adenauer, the West German chancellor, gathered at the Himmerod Monastery with military leaders and experts who previously served in Hitler's Wehrmacht (the Nazi armed forces). The men discussed how to restore the nation's military following the war. Many of the attendees were later granted high offices in the Bundeswehr and NATO.

The substance of this discussion later became part of the "Himmeroder Memorandum" of Oct. 9, 1950. The memo's main thesis was that a future German Army required rehabilitating the Wehrmacht. This document served as the basis for negotiations with the West. Though Adenauer carefully negotiated and knew the demands had to be implemented in small steps, it is clear that Germany's military ambition still smoldered.

The embers of World War II hadn't yet been extinguished, and already top German leaders were plotting how to rebuild Germany's military!

By 1955, with the Communist threat rising, Germany was allowed to rearm and join the newly created North Atlantic Treaty Organization. There were conditions: Germany must waive the right to biological and chemical weapons, the Bundeswehr was to be capped at 500,000, and it was to operate under NATO command. On June 7, 1955, Theodor Blank was appointed minister of defense, giving Germany its first postwar defense minister.

The Allies also loosened their ban on German rearmament. Step by step, *the very same industry* that had built Hitler's war implements was allowed to restart operations. Their stories are told not just in hidden documents but in detail on the companies' official websites.

For example, the Rheinmetall website provides an extensive chronology of the company's history during the war. Concerning the years 1942 to 1944, Rheinmetall writes: "As the war progresses, the Nazi regime demands ever greater efforts on the part of industry to step up arms production. The requirements of the German Army, Navy and Luftwaffe for technical innovations force the development departments of Rheinmetall-Borsig to push ahead at full speed, too. By July 1944, the company has developed some 20 weapon systems that have been fielded by the Wehrmacht." What is Rheinmetall's intention here? *Some would say it is bragging about its support for Adolf Hitler!*

Many other arms companies recount similar stories. Even more interesting is how they returned to business after being banned in Potsdam in 1945.

Rheinmetall-Borsig AG split into two companies to make it easier to obtain production permits. In 1950 both companies received permission to manufacture civil sector products. In 1956, Rheinmetall was authorized to resume producing military equipment. *Thus the Potsdam Agreement was undermined not long after its ink had dried!*

The story of Krauss-Maffei Wegmann is even more striking. The company's official website reads, "Krauss-Maffei Wegmann reflects on 170 years of history which is steeped in tradition and closely linked with the Kassel and Munich locations." The company is indeed "steeped in tradition"—but tradition to be proud of?

Krauss-Maffei Wegmann contributed to the building of the tanks that rolled into Poland and across Europe. In that tradition, the company today produces greater, faster and far more powerful tanks. It was Nazi tradition to name tanks after big cats, such as Tiger and Panther. The war's end halted work on another tank that was to be called Leopard. But in the 1960s, Krauss-Maffei Wegmann started production on the Leopard 1 battle tank. The Gepard and Leopard 2 followed. (To learn more about where Hitler's arms manufacturers are today, see the infographic on page 18.)

The very arms industry that shocked the world in World War II rose rapidly during the Cold War. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) says Germany spent as much as 5.2 percent of its gross domestic product on its military in 1963. By 1982, 300 Leopard 2 tanks were manufactured annually. By 1990, the now-reunited German Army numbered 500,000.

NATO documents record that throughout the latter half of the 20th century, the Bundeswehr had become the "backbone of NATO's conventional defense in Central Europe." Mere decades after the Potsdam Agreement, NATO was relying on Germany to deter Russia on the Continent, and German industry was churning out tanks and other military supplies.

The Soviet Union's collapse in December 1991 had a direct impact on Germany's military expansion. But not in the way you might expect. Germany actually began to *reduce* military spending. Why?

Saving Money for the Third Round

When the Cold War ended, Germany largely stopped militarizing. Even as NATO officials demanded that Berlin increase its military budget, it refused.

Did this mean Germany's military ambitions had been extinguished? On the contrary: It meant the newly united Germany was rejecting NATO's authority. Within NATO, Germany had reached its authorized military potential. To exceed these imposed limitations, it developed its own plan for military domination. This plan required first focusing on getting healthy and strong domestically, bringing Eastern Germany into the fold, and securing dominance over Europe economically and politically.

Rather than invest billions each year to safeguard Europe, Germany relied on the U.S.-sponsored security umbrella. The billions it saved were then invested in the civil industry and economy. Outside of NATO, however, Germany developed its arms industry, its integration with other EU armies and its foreign deployment.

Today, while many countries face bankruptcy, Germany has one of the strongest economies in the world.

The U.S. and Russia are still among the world's largest military powers. But what about the race for the *next generation* of weapon systems? Can the U.S. or Russia win that race? Technologically, they have the capacity—but both are in trouble financially and are having to cut military spending. Meanwhile, Germany's economy is comparatively strong, and is ready to finance a military upgrade!

In this age of cyberwarfare, artificial intelligence and technological advancement, it takes a lot of money and effort to keep apace with competitors. AT THIS CRUCIAL TIME IN HISTORY, THE U.S. AND RUSSIA ARE FORCED TO MAKE MILITARY CUTS—WHILE GERMANY CAN REARM.

“Germany has benefited from the fact that the strategic situation has remained calm for two decades, allowing it to invest in the civilian economy,” stated Swiss military expert Albert Stahel in an interview with Focus Online. “But that is now over: The whole orientation of the state must be rethought. The armament machine must be restarted” (Feb. 7, 2017; *Trumpet* translation throughout).

GERMANY TODAY IS READY—ECONOMICALLY AND INDUSTRIALLY—TO REENTER THE MILITARY ARMAMENT GAME. It has the technology, factories and industry. It also has decades of experience with producing world-class military hardware.

Secret Strategy Behind Exports

“At first glance,” wrote German public broadcaster ARD, “Germany looks like a deeply peaceful country. But that is only partially true. Since the mid-1950s, German armaments companies have been selling weapons all over the world” (Nov. 2, 2017). In 2016, *Handelsblatt* wrote that “Germany is one of the largest arms producers in the world” (Jan. 25, 2016).

Though Germany’s military spending declined, its military production industry never stopped. In fact, it grew from strength to strength.

The March 2018 SIPRI Fact Sheet states, “The combined arms exports by European Union member states accounted for 27 percent of the global total in 2013–17.” Germany alone rose to become the world’s THIRD-LARGEST ARMS EXPORTER. Even after recent cuts, it remains in the top five, currently fabricating 7 percent of the world’s total arms exports. That is impressive, especially for a nation that is such a military lightweight itself!

But why is Germany exporting weapons everywhere? It’s not the profit. In 2017, weapons exports accounted for less than half a percent of its total exports.

Germany’s Economic Ministry states on its website: “Arms exports are not resources for economic policy.” In other words, it has a *strategic* reason to manufacture and export arms. The government gives at least two reasons: It builds strategic partnerships and alliances, and it maintains Germany’s arms industry and thus its national security.

Manufacturing and exporting weapons brings enormous strategic and military benefits. Germany may have neglected its military stock at home, but it hasn’t neglected its capacity to manufacture military hardware. It has made profits by producing and exporting weaponry while others have spent money storing and upgrading weaponry. Germany may not have thousands of tanks and millions of machine guns in storage, but it has the factories, the plans and blueprints, the experience and the skill set to militarize!

Germany has tested its weaponry in various terrains around the world. Repeatedly the industry has been alerted to malfunctions in the equipment, and upgraded and perfected its weaponry in peacetime. For example, Turkey used German tanks against the Islamic State in Syria, giving the Germans feedback that helped them perfect their design. Had Germany overstocked its military warehouses with tanks, it would have had to upgrade thousands of malfunctioning tanks on its own dime.

Germany produces some of the most highly demanded tanks in the world. In cooperation with France, it is working on the next generation of combat systems. Newly designed tanks are predicted to outperform Russia’s T-14. A joint venture of Airbus and Dassault Aviation aims for dominance with next-generation fighters and a Future Combat Air System. German-French fighter jets are predicted to excel America’s F-35.

War Factories

Though Germany isn’t a military heavyweight, the overall picture is strong. Its military budget is the seventh highest in the world. This rank could suddenly rise if Germany commits to rearm—for which its *capacity* is mighty.

Germany excels in the small-arms industry, which is a conglomerate of smaller manufacturers and other industry branches that also produce arms and security technologies. Among its greatest armories is Heckler & Koch, one of the world’s five largest gun manufacturers, which produces handguns, pistols, rifles and machine guns. Its G3 is modeled after the Kalashnikov AK-47.

Another great manufacturer is Germany’s photonics group Jenoptik, which produces mechatronic and sensory products for civilian and military markets. The company is present in more than 80 countries. In 2017, it generated about €748 million (us\$850 million) in revenue.

The Munich-based company MTU Aero Engines produces engines for combat aircraft, such as the Eurofighter, and the civilian Airbus A380. Founded in 1934, the company today extends worldwide to 14 locations, with 10,000 employees and revenue of €5 billion (\$5.7 billion).

Diehl Defense is the armaments division of the Nuremberg-based Diehl Group. The company specializes in the production of tank tracks, ammunition and guided missiles. The company is present in 18 locations, primarily in Europe.

Krauss-Maffei Wegmann specializes in manufacturing howitzers, troop transporters and tanks. Its famous Leopard 2 was built in cooperation with Rheinmetall. kmw has 3,500 employees in seven countries; 30 countries rely on its military

technology.

Rheinmetall Defense is the armaments division of the Düsseldorf-based Rheinmetall Group. Its main products include tanks, anti-aircraft systems and ammunition.

Steel manufacturer ThyssenKrupp also operates an armaments division. The company produces world-class submarines and naval vessels.

Some of Germany's arms manufacturers have also expanded through mergers beyond national borders. MBDA developed into a European defense company with locations in France, Britain, Italy, Germany and Spain. The company specializes in guided missiles.

Germany's largest arms manufacturer is also a merger. The Airbus Group consists of the German DASA, the French Aérospatiale-Matra and the Spanish CASA. The company specializes in fighter jets, troop transporters, tankers and combat helicopters. European aircraft producer Airbus is ranked the second-largest industry in the field.

Europe's land and maritime production industries are undergoing similar mergers. Government reports published in November say Germany will lead the production of a new European super tank that involves the German companies Rheinmetall and KMW and the French Nexter. France's state-owned Naval Group also seeks to merge with ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems.

German industry has also formed business and strategic partnerships with industries worldwide. Take Rheinmetall: Beyond exporting its goods around the world, the company is known for investing in other countries directly. For example, it has been heavily involved in the construction of a tank factory in Turkey.

Rheinmetall's reach gives it power to subjugate competitors. In January, the British defense company BAE Systems announced that it is selling a majority controlling share of its Land UK division to the German Rheinmetall Group.

Andreas Schwer, a native German and executive for the Düsseldorf Rheinmetall Group, sits on the board of the Saudi Arabian Military Industries. Then there's Rheinmetall Italia and American Rheinmetall Munitions, the company's operations in Italy and America.

This manufacturer was banned after World War II, and today it is one of the top industrial companies in the world!

Combining the strength of its arms industry with its civil industry, Germany could soon be mass-producing tanks and other military vehicles instead of cars. Incidentally, Europe's great car and truck producers, Mercedes, Volvo, Renault, Volkswagen and MAN, are all involved to some degree in the production of military equipment and parts.

These factors give Germany enormous military *potential*. It may not be brimming with tanks, fighter jets and guns, BUT IT HAS THE INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY TO CREATE ALL THESE THINGS. Indeed, it does manufacture them for others. It need only keep a few at home.

As peaceful as Germany seems because its army has shrunk since 1990, its military potential has grown *exponentially*. The stage for sudden rearmament is set.

European Strategy

When calculating Germany's military potential, it is important to also consider the capacity of its European neighbors. Why? Because, thanks to its economic and political position in Europe, Germany can tap into their assets. Moreover, Bible prophecy speaks of an end-time *Europeans* superpower, led by Germany.

In time, we will see Germany gain more influence and even exercise direct control over France's air force, Italy's navy and Poland's impressive tank brigade. Indeed, the effort to streamline these disparate sectors is already underway. Germany is working to merge Europe's weapons industry, its military operational headquarters, its armies and its leadership. Most of the Dutch Army is already integrated into the German Army. The Czech and Romanian armies have also agreed to join the Germans. Our Trend article details the progress of the integration: "[Europe's Push Toward a Unified Military](#)."

In 2017, EU nations launched a military pact called Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) that includes logistics, transportation and training missions that will help coordinate member countries' operations.

But Europe's army and military would be largely ineffective without capable leadership at the officer level. This is why Germany is training military officers all over Europe.

The Bundeswehr, Germany's armed forces, currently has 24 training facilities open to soldiers from other EU member states. It also has troops in 55 training facilities of other armies across Europe. Some Bundeswehr officers are attending the elite officers' school in Saint-Cyr, learning about the military structure, strategies, resources and mentality of France.

German officers are learning to work with and to command foreign soldiers. They are cooperating with the French on flying helicopters. German submarines could soon set off for patrol carrying joint German-Norwegian crews.

Preparing for World War III

In 1945, Herbert W. Armstrong told radio listeners: "From the very start of World War I, [the Germans] have considered the possibility of losing this second round, as they did the first—and they have carefully, methodically planned, in such eventuality, the third round—World War III!" (May 9, 1945).

Between 1945 and his death in 1986, Mr. Armstrong delivered this same warning hundreds, perhaps thousands, of times. Like Churchill, he understood that Germany "is a country fertile in military surprises." But Mr. Armstrong had another advantage: He understood the *many* biblical passages prophesying the formation of an end-time German-led United States of Europe.

He knew the prophecy in Isaiah 10, where God says He will use the "Assyrian" as a corrective rod to punish the nations of Israel (America and Britain). Verse 6 says Germany (modern-day Assyria) will have the military might "to tread them down like the mire of the streets."

He knew the prophecy of Daniel 7. Depicted in this chapter are four "beasts," each representing a world-ruling empire. These empires rise and fall chronologically; that means the fourth is on the scene prior to the return of Jesus Christ. This fourth "beast" is the most destructive; verse 7 says it is "DREADFUL AND TERRIBLE, AND STRONG EXCEEDINGLY . . ."

Mr. Armstrong knew the prophecies of Revelation 13 and 17. He understood the identity of the "woman" in Revelation 17 who rides the seven-headed, 10-horned beast. He understood that the seven heads of this beast represent the seven consecutive resurrections of the Holy Roman Empire, and that the 10 horns on the seventh and final head represent a united, German-led European empire.

He understood the prophecies in Ezekiel, Habakkuk and Matthew 24 that describe a time of intense violence and tribulation. Notice Habakkuk 1:8-10, which describe this end-time European empire: "Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it."

This passage is describing the single most destructive, most frightening military force in human history!

Remember Genghis Khan's mass slaughter, Joseph Stalin's gulags and purges, and the Nazi Holocaust? THE DESTRUCTION INFLICTED BY THE GERMAN-LED EUROPEAN WAR MACHINE DESCRIBED IN BIBLE PROPHECY WILL ECLIPSE ALL THESE!

This is why we must closely monitor Germany's military. The Germans are an industrious, disciplined people, with many wonderful qualities. BUT HISTORY SHOWS THEY HAVE A PENCHANT FOR WAR AND CONQUEST It would be unwise to discard centuries of history in a moment of self-righteous political correctness.

The will, the incentive, for war grows almost by the week. Inside Germany, issues like migration, radical Islam and economic uncertainty are arousing nationalist sentiments. As anxieties and fears grow, the people will naturally begin to think more about the need for security and protection, and the need to defend their interests at home and abroad. The more threatened they feel, the more they will accept the *need* to militarize.

Nearly the entire international community is virtually *begging* for Germany to do more militarily—and not just in Europe, but also in the Middle East, in Central Asia and in Africa. How often in the past two years have we heard America's president call on Berlin to spend more on the military and take more responsibility for Europe's security? Now we see France and Germany making real progress on developing a European military.

Consider the mounting threats too. Europe faces pressure from Russia, which is unafraid to show force and is drawing ever closer to China and Asia. The problems in the Middle East, in Iran, Syria and Turkey, all ripple into Europe. The continued invasion by migrants from the Middle East and Africa is a daily threat. Meanwhile, the U.S. and Britain—once the guarantors of Europe's strategic defense—are abandoning that role.

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN MORE INCENTIVE FOR GERMANY AND EUROPE TO MILITARIZE.

But there is also an *even more profound and inspiring reason* why Germany is militarizing!

In 2011, *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry wrote, "But here's the most astounding and inspiring part of Revelation 17: God put it in the minds of Europe's leaders to do what they're doing!" (February 2011). He was referring to verse 17, which says, "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

Will you believe what the Bible plainly states? Germany's imminent militarization, followed by its initiation of World War III, IS ACTUALLY GOD'S WILL.

But *why* would God allow another world war? This is hard for many people to fathom.

The answer? Through this coming conflict, God is trying to establish a connection with mankind, particularly with the end-

time nations of Israel. God takes no pleasure in suffering. In Ezekiel 33:11, God says, "As I live ... I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; BUT THAT THE WICKED TURN FROM HIS WAY AND LIVE turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

This is God's great purpose for the coming tribulation: He is correcting the nations of Israel, *and all mankind*, to help them turn from their ways AND LIVE!

Since 1931, *especially since December 1989*, God has been telling Israel, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways." God has been measuring Israel's correction for many, many years. Some have listened, repented and changed—and these people will be protected in a place of safety when the tribulation comes (Revelation 12:14). But most people and nations reject God and reject His warnings.

Today, the only way God can get people's attention is by getting tough. Mankind simply must see the consequences of their rebellion and repent. You might wonder: *Is there no other way that God could break through to mankind?* Sadly, God has tried every other option.

But there are a few, *and indeed only a few*, who understand what God is doing today. These few understand the prophecies and see the great hope in their fulfillment. They see God's hand in world events. They see Bible prophecy as proof of God's existence, and that His Word, the Holy Bible, is true and accurate. These few today proclaim God's master plan. These few are striving to submit to God's law and government, and they experience the happiness and blessings that result. ■

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