

MAY-JUNE 2005

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

SPECIAL REPORT:

A NEW POPE

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

THE
REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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Joseph Ratzinger—now Pope Benedict XVI—has been described in various ways by admirers, hardliners, liberals, detractors and critics alike. Now that he has been elected to the highest office in the Roman Catholic Church, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, secularists, world leaders and 1.1 billion Catholics around the world are waiting to see how this new religious leader will use his seat of power and influence.

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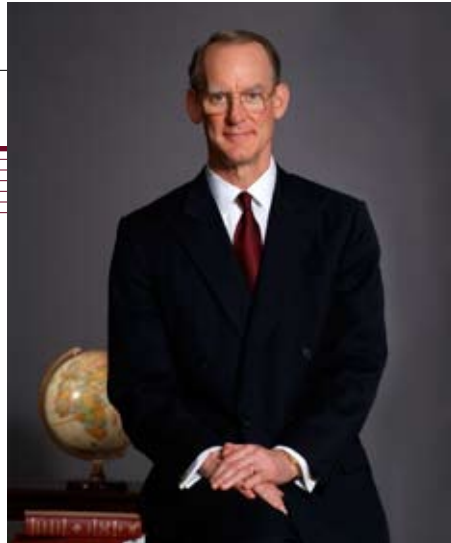
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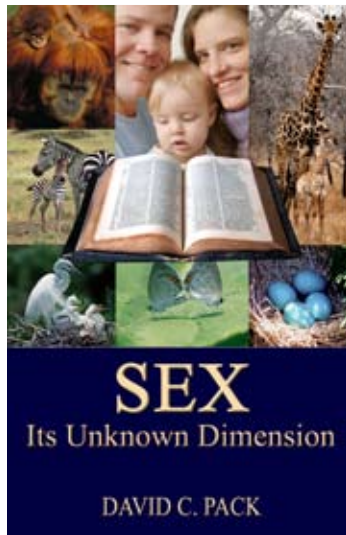


SEX *Its Unknown Dimension*

IN 1964, Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986), Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, published a book then titled *God Speaks Out On The New Morality*. Several years later, it was given a new title, *THE MISSING DIMENSION IN SEX*. Within twenty years, almost a million and a half copies of this book had been distributed, eventually reaching virtually every nation and territory of the world. It was later discontinued by Mr. Armstrong's successors, and its vital principles lost to nearly the entire generation that followed.

With the rapid acceleration of the sexual revolution, begun in the 1960s, there has come a need to rewrite the truths revealed in Mr. Armstrong's book from a twenty-first-century perspective. This book brings these principles and truths back to life. It also works in direct concert with, and is an important companion to, our extensive book *All About DATING and COURTSHIP*.

The world is now drenched—actually more like



This "Personal" is the introduction of our new book, *SEX - Its Unknown Dimension*.

drowning—in a deluge of sex, with much or most of it having no real meaning or right purpose connected to it. More than ever in history, all mankind is awash in every conceivable kind of sexual pleasure, fantasy, perversion and pursuit—in or out of marriage, because fewer and fewer people any longer make a distinction between the two. There has come to be no end to—and virtually no limits on—advertisements, television programs, movies, books, magazines, articles, photographs and websites for every kind of pornography and sex-related activity that the misguided creative genius of human beings could devise.

But sadly, there is a *drought* in right understanding of these things.

Almost none know why they were born—what is the SUPREME PURPOSE for human life. Most have no idea that there even *is* a purpose for human existence. Philosophers are not explaining it, because they do not know what or whether there is a purpose for your life. Educators are not teaching it, because no one can teach what he himself has not been taught. Scientists do not speak to this subject, because it lies outside their field. Moralists are ignorant—and so are the theologians of all the world's supposed "great religions."

But this ignorance has been no more evident than in the

misunderstood and largely unknown purpose of sex. Believing himself to be merely the highest of the animals in an evolutionary chain, man has remained in the dark, completely unable to see a reason for sex, or why human beings exist as men and women. Yet, there *is* an awesome purpose for humanity collectively—and you personally—and, when fully understood, it is inseparable from the purposes of sex.

The nations of the world possess a vast sum of knowledge, and this fund of knowledge increases every day, but they are ignorant of the right *kind* of knowledge—SPIRITUALLY REVEALED KNOWLEDGE. This is because the modern system of education is morally and spiritually bankrupt! Deluded educators have been biased against God and His Word by having had the atheistic teaching of evolution funneled into their minds from childhood. They have taught young people for decades that there are “no absolutes” and that they must follow “situation ethics” in all circumstances. These young people have grown up into now several generations from which the world’s leaders have come.

These educators have led the world into a kind of secular humanism—where people are driven by how they *feel* rather than clear definitions of *right* and *wrong*! This has led to a level of immorality and kinds of perversion perhaps never before seen in history. But there *is* right and wrong in life—and the educators of this world have cut themselves off from this knowledge (Isa. 59:1-2). They cannot teach what they were never taught. And neither could their parents who were also indoctrinated in the same false thinking!

Also, this world’s churches have kept humanity steeped in traditional pagan philosophies and teachings that have deceived the world for millennia. All the world’s religions have ignored the great spiritual principle of *cause* and *effect* that governs every aspect of life. They have all neglected to teach true *spiritual* values—and that there is a vital, inspired INSTRUCTION BOOK

from Almighty God that contains special knowledge. It explains that there is a great SPIRITUAL LAW that, when obeyed, brings all the good things that every human being seeks. Confused by the conflicting influence of blinded religious leaders and deceived educators, the masses have been permitted to put the pursuit of sex for pleasure as at or near the pinnacle of all human goals.

The results have been terrible—the fruits absolutely devastating and most tragic in a host of awful consequences almost too many to enumerate.

“Authorities” Do Not Know!

We live in an age when everyone is an “expert.” Newspapers, magazines, television and radio programs are filled with people giving their opinions—about everything! Every problem, issue or important current event confronting society now seems to command the view of journalists, scientists, psychologists, educators and every conceivable kind of self-styled or self-appointed “authority” on the subject. Invariably, they disagree with each other—and few even remotely consider what God thinks. Though many are questioning marriage, only God can reveal its purpose. There is certainly nothing wrong with questioning marriage. In fact, everyone should ask the questions that the “authorities” ask, but cannot answer. These “authorities” do not even understand what you have read so far in this Introduction. Again, this is because they look to evolution as the origin of the human race!

Yet, if human beings are products of evolution, how and when did the tradition of marriage begin? Since evolution teaches that human beings are the highest form of “animal,” we must ask, if this were true, when did pre-humans or near-humans or almost-humans begin to marry? And how did the two sexes come to be? It is ludicrous to think that this could have happened slowly, over millions of years. How did offspring survive until the amazing mechanisms of sex could be perfected—and in no less than mil-

lions of species of animals as well? Evolutionists cannot answer these questions. Returning to marriage, at best, they can merely suppose that man (not God), at some point in the distant past, devised the idea to “get married.” Naturally, they could not, therefore, see any attached purposes or reasons for sex other than producing offspring.

Many professing “Christians” claim to follow the Bible, while believing the theory of evolution. However, most never think through and examine their beliefs. Consider. While saying that they believe in a Creator, they reject the Genesis account as literal. This forces them to draw the same conclusion as evolutionists about the how and when of marriage. They cannot see that “*God created*” human beings “*male and female*” (1:27).

Also recognize that it has been traditional Christianity that has taught that celibacy—remaining unmarried—is a “higher” state of existence. This supposes that marriage, and of course sex within marriage, is purely for the purpose of procreation—having children and propagating the human race. This presents a problem.

Consider again. All mammals reproduce in exactly the same way. This is a fact of nature. Yet none of them marry. And human beings and animals are also different in practically every other way. Now, if having children is the only purpose for marriage—or sex—then why should human beings marry? If they are merely the highest of the animals and, once again, sex and marriage have no other purpose but procreation, then marriage is a waste of time.

Do you see the point? Understanding the purposes of sex “connects the dots” to marriage, and then on to the purposes of marriage itself. Of course, then, the purposes and right use of sex, and that it only belongs in marriage, must be divinely revealed.

Take the point further—and consider this. If celibacy is the highest

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Palestinian Democracy



A Solution for Peace?

Can Palestinian democracy truly bring peace between Palestinians and Israelis in a region that has been torn apart by hatred, prejudice and murder for centuries?

BY ROBERT R. FARRELL

IT HAS BEEN a long time since the words “peace” and “hope” have been associated with the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Over the past several years, the nation of Israel has experienced some of the bloodiest violence on record. However, the death of Yasser Arafat has renewed optimism for a peaceful end to hostilities in the region.

Mr. Arafat, an implacable foe of Israel, never embraced diplomacy as a means of bringing about change. He wholeheartedly supported terror as a weapon and, to emphasize this, once appeared at the United Nations brandishing both a gun and an olive branch. His embrace of terrorism caused him to lose credibility in the eyes of Israel and the United States. The result was his failure to create a Palestinian state.

However, since Mr. Arafat’s death, things have changed. More moderate

Palestinian leaders have emerged, committed to resolving differences with Israel through non-violent means, and to establishing an independent, democratic Palestinian state.

Will this be achieved?

Enter Mahmoud Abbas

One such leader to emerge is Mahmoud Abbas. Mr. Abbas, a long-time associate of Yasser Arafat, was elected President of the Palestinian Authority in January 2005. Born in Safed in British Mandate Palestine in 1935, his family fled to Syria when Safed became a part of Israel in 1948. A highly educated man, he later graduated from university with degrees in law and history and is one of the few Palestinians to study Israeli history and politics. He is also the author of several books.

While in exile during the 1950s, Mr. Abbas helped recruit young Palestinians to the cause of “liberation,” many of whom later went on to become leading figures in the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

In the 1960s, along with Yasser Arafat, Mr. Abbas co-founded Fatah,

the main political faction within the PLO. As a close associate of Mr. Arafat, he accompanied him into exile in several countries. While the flamboyant Mr. Arafat took the limelight, Mr. Abbas stayed in the background, becoming known for his clean and simple living. Prior to the January 2005 election, he had never been known to carry a gun, fight a battle or run for election.

Mr. Abbas has long been considered one of the leading Palestinians dedicated to searching for a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. While Mr. Arafat repeatedly advocated change through violence and terrorism, Mr. Abbas supported change through negotiation. He was a leading advocate of negotiations with the Israelis and initiated dialogue with liberal Jewish movements in the 1970s. In fact, his long years of good relations with Jewish leftists won him a reputation as a “dove,” eventually leading to his heading the Palestinian negotiating team in Oslo, Norway, and becoming one of the architects of the Oslo peace accord with Israel in 1993.

After 48 years in exile, he returned

to Israel in 1995. In March 2003, he was appointed Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, but was never given full authority, because Yasser Arafat insisted on having the final say in all decisions. In addition, Mr. Arafat maintained control over the security services, which further undermined Mr. Abbas' position. While Prime Minister, he signed the U.S.-backed "Road Map to a Middle East Peace," which calls for a Palestinian crackdown on terrorism and for Israel to freeze all settlement activities. But he resigned in frustration after only four months in office, accusing Mr. Arafat of thwarting his efforts by not giving him control of Palestinian security organizations.

Though considered the "brains" behind the PLO, he lacked Mr. Arafat's charisma and was regarded by many Palestinians as being too conciliatory toward Israel. However, he was popular in the United States and Israel as a man who, in their eyes, is a moderate capable of compromise.

Following the death of Yasser Arafat in November 2004, the Palestinian Authority held an election to choose his successor. Mr. Abbas was elected President on January 9, 2005, with 62 percent of the vote. In choosing Mr. Abbas, voters elected a man who believes that the way to peace with Israel is through negotiation. However, his ultimate goals are the same as Mr. Arafat's. He ran his campaign on the principles of a Palestinian state with the same borders prior to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the right of return for Palestinian refugees (over four million) who fled or were removed from Israel in 1948.

Following in Arafat's Footsteps

While campaigning, Mr. Abbas made it clear that he would not back down from certain key Palestinian positions, such as the release of some 7,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with east Jerusalem as its capital. Interestingly enough, as a gesture toward the militant groups while campaigning, Mr. Abbas allowed himself to be held aloft by mili-

tant gunmen and, at one point, referred to Israel as the "Zionist enemy." Upon winning the election, as if to reassure the electorate of his commitment to the legacy of his predecessor, Mr. Abbas immediately dedicated his victory to Mr. Arafat.

In electing Mr. Abbas, Palestinians have elected a man who is strikingly different from his predecessor and former colleague Yasser Arafat. Mr. Abbas wears a suit, not the military uniform Mr. Arafat wore. Mr. Arafat loved crowds and was a showman, but the intellectual Mr. Abbas shuns the spotlight. Mr. Abbas is a devout Muslim, a quick study and relentless negotiator. However, regardless of his personality differences with Mr. Arafat, their goal remains the same. As a leading analyst said, "He may wear a suit, he may not jump on tables or shout that a million martyrs will march to Jerusalem, but his demands from Israel are no different than Arafat's were."

His moderate stance does not engender support from the majority of Palestinians, particularly the youth. A recent poll by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research indicated that two-thirds of the respondents believe that the Palestinians have achieved more with violence than through negotiations. On the other hand, many are weary from the violence and, as a result, other polls suggest that the majority of Palestinians would like to see a lasting ceasefire with Israel and a return to negotiations. Since Mr. Abbas is seen as the leader with whom the Israelis would be most willing to talk to, he was elected as President of the Palestinian Authority, even though most Palestinians see him as an "uninspiring" choice.

International Reaction

Today, there is a cautious optimism in Israel that Israeli-Palestinian relations will improve. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has said that Mahmoud Abbas is a man with whom Israel can do business. In the aftermath of the Palestinian election, Mr. Sharon has indicated a willingness to speak with Mr. Abbas, after years of sidelining Mr. Arafat. Mr. Sharon has provided

assurance of a conciliatory tone by indicating a plan to remove all Jewish settlers from Gaza in 2005, a move that some on the political right in Israel see as "giving in to terrorism."

The United States was quick to congratulate Mr. Abbas publicly, with hopes that his election would lead to the re-kindling of peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The U.S. considered Mr. Arafat's death as an "opportunity" to restart the peace process, as he was repeatedly criticized as the main obstacle to peace.

But along with U.S. optimism, there are uncertainties over Mr. Abbas' ability to persuade militant groups to cease attacks on Israelis. Mr. Abbas is facing pressure to consolidate the security forces and show that he is serious about curbing terrorist activity.

Future U.S. economic assistance to the Palestinians is conditional on Mr. Abbas taking steps to control the security forces and end attacks on Israelis by radical groups. Increased support from Washington will be crucial as the Palestinian Authority fills the vacuum created by Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. In a show of U.S. support, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has publicly given her backing for a Palestinian state.

Likewise, the European Union (EU) has pledged to help make the most of the opportunity presented by Mr. Abbas' rise to the Palestinian presidency. Following the elections, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said that Europe was willing to help politically, economically, with security or wherever there is a need. The EU has already pledged financial support to the Palestinian Authority. It is intensely interested in a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis because of its long standing commercial and cultural ties to the Middle East, its reliance on oil from the region and its large (and growing) Muslim communities.

The Arab nations have expressed support for Mr. Abbas and the continuation of the peace process with Israel. Meanwhile, they remain suspicious of Israel's intentions.

Appeasing the Militants

Since becoming Prime Minister, Mr. Abbas has won the commitment of the militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad to end their violent attacks on Israeli citizens—if Israel agrees to end its attacks on occupied territories, end assassinations and abandon its pursuit of wanted Palestinian fighters.

In return, Israel has responded by taking steps to reduce raids and killings in Palestinian areas. It has promised to free some prisoners and hand over responsibility for security in a number of West Bank towns. But it is unwilling to commit to a total ceasefire with groups it sees as terrorist organizations. Israel's concern is the disarming of militants before serious peace negotiations begin.

Hamas is an astute, politically sophisticated group. By holding back and not committing to a ceasefire, it is buying itself some time to assess Israel's credibility. In addition, it is playing for advantage in the Palestinian political arena. To go along fully with the ceasefire, it may well seek Mr. Abbas' commitment on a wide range of issues, including assurance that its fighters will not be disarmed.

Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad are seeking more influence in the PLO, which has long been dominated by Fatah. They are likely, at least temporarily, to abide by the cease-fire as a means of gaining political advantage. However, other rogue groups, including Hezbollah and the al-Aqsa Martyr Brigades, remain the biggest threat to the peace process, as they do not recognize the cease-fire. In fact, Palestinian officials have repeatedly accused Hezbollah of offering money to local militants for staging attacks. Israeli officials have also raised concerns about Hezbollah, a political party as well as a well-armed military force.

The American government is working toward an agreement that would involve the Palestinian security forces disarming militant groups in exchange for an Israeli military retreat to its positions at the beginning of the Intifada ("armed uprising") in 2000.

Steps Toward Peace

Prime Minister Sharon has said that if Mr. Abbas acts to stop terrorism, Israel will begin a plan to pull approximately 8,000 Jewish settlers, as well as the Israeli army, out of Gaza and parts of the West Bank by the end of 2005. During the 1967 Six Day War, Israel captured the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, home to four million Palestinians.

From the Israeli point of view, the Palestinians must demonstrate that they can govern responsibly by putting an end to terrorist attacks. However, if the Israelis pull out and Gaza becomes a lawless region, it will be difficult to persuade Israel to pull out of other areas. If the Palestinians in Gaza show that they can maintain a stable government and live peaceably with their Israeli neighbors, Israel's justification to continue occupying other territories will weaken. Mr. Sharon needs the violence against Israelis to end if he is to convince his parliament to support a pullout from Gaza, as well as relaxing the army's grip on the West Bank.

But, the Palestinians need help if things are to go well in Gaza. They need to develop their struggling economy and build a capable security establishment. The United States and Europe may need to assist Mr. Abbas if these objectives are to be achieved.

As a further step in the peace process, Mr. Sharon and Mr. Abbas attended a summit in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh in February 2005, hosted by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and King Abdullah of Jordan.

This was the first high-level meeting between Israelis and Palestinians in more than 18 months—the highest level of talks since Mr. Sharon came to power. In the weeks leading up to the summit, Mr. Abbas managed to persuade Palestinian militant organizations to stick to a ceasefire; in return, Israel scaled back military operations in the Palestinian territories.

At the summit, Israel and the Palestinian government agreed to a ceasefire from the four years of violence (the Intifada). Mr. Abbas announced an end to violence against Israelis wher-

ever they are, thus recommitting to an informal ceasefire agreed to with Palestinian militant groups. In return, Prime Minister Sharon promised not to stage any more military raids into Palestinian territory. Israel has also agreed to free hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and hand over control of some West Bank towns. However, militant groups have declared that they had not signed any agreement. Hamas said it would join the ceasefire *only* after it has judged whether Israel is keeping its side of the agreement.

Israel said that it might suspend its pursuit of wanted Palestinian militants. If the ceasefire holds, it could set in motion a final peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. The peace process could be bolstered by revitalized U.S. interest due to Mr. Arafat's death and Mr. Abbas' success in restraining militant groups. Meanwhile, Israel is set to withdraw settlers from Gaza and parts of the West Bank in 2005.

Nevertheless, the two sides remain suspicious of each other. The Palestinians suspect that Israel is getting a cessation of violence without having to make serious concessions on military occupation of their territory. In addition, some fear that Israel is pulling out of Gaza to become more entrenched in the West Bank.

On the other hand, Israel is suspicious that the militant groups will not be comprehensively disarmed. If the militants continue to target Israelis through rocket attacks and suicide bombers, the peace plan will quickly end. The resolution of difficult issues (such as rightful ownership of Jerusalem) remains sometime in the distant future. However, the two sides seem determined to forge ahead.

Both sides have their own extremists to contend with. Jewish extremists, angry over the government's plans to withdraw from Gaza, are threatening the lives of Israeli Cabinet ministers and Prime Minister Sharon. Palestinian militants, adopting a "wait and see" approach, have not bound themselves to permanently commit to a ceasefire.

*Please see **PALESTINIAN**, page 25*



The LURE of GAMBLING

P A R T T W O

Gambling has progressed from a pas-time to a PLAGUE! Why? What is the biblical perspective on this activity?

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE
AND BRUCE A. RITTER

IN PART ONE of this series, we looked at the exploding popularity of all forms of gambling and some of the factors contributing to this growth. In Part Two, we will examine the corresponding increase in *problem* and *compulsive* gambling, and study the biblical principles that apply to gambling as a whole.

A segment of those who gamble fall into two related categories: Problem gamblers, and compulsive (also known as “pathological”) gamblers. According to *WebMD*, more than eight percent of new gamblers end up with some type of gambling addiction.

Problem gambling has been described as “an involvement in risky gambling behaviors that adversely affects the individual’s well-being; this may include issues: of

relationships, family; financial matters, social standing and vocational pursuits” (*Arizona Council on Compulsive Gambling – AZCCG*).

Compulsive gambling is more severe, defined as “...a progressive disorder characterized by a continuous or periodic loss of control over gambling; a preoccupation with gambling and with obtaining money with which to gamble; irrational thinking; and a continuation of the behavior despite adverse consequences” (*Psychiatric Annals*, Dr. Richard Rosenthal).

Risk factors associated with problem or compulsive gambling include: parents who gamble; availability of gambling (especially during the formative years of life); inadequate psychological coping strategies; and simply being male.

Research is underway to compare compulsive gambling to other addictions such as alcohol, and to examine brain chemistry among pathological gamblers. Similarities between the brains of compulsive gamblers and drug addicts have been documented, such as relative unreactivity to dopamine (a chemical neurotransmitter associated with feelings of reward or satisfaction) within both groups. However, researchers admit that these chemical irregularities may be a *result* of pathological gambling, rather than the *cause* (“Gambling Fever Starts in Brain,” *The Washington Post*).

Authorities on compulsive gambling have documented four phases through which a pathological gambler typically progresses. Phase one is called the “winning phase” or the “introductory phase.” This is a period, or sometimes just a single occurrence, of monetary gain from gambling. Second is the “losing phase,” in which losses begin to accumulate, and the gambler often pursues larger bets or greater odds, rationalizing that it is just a streak of bad luck. Third is the “desperation phase.” This is a phase during which gambling consumes most of an individual’s time and energy, sometimes to the point of neglecting physical health, habitual lying, and the loss of possessions and family. Finally, the fourth phase is called the “hopeless phase”—characterized by clinical depression, bankruptcy, nervous breakdown, prison time and sometimes suicide attempts (AZCCG).

Types of Pathological Gamblers

Compulsive gamblers are divided into two categories: “action gamblers” and “escape gamblers.” The personality of the gambler, and thus the motivation to gamble, determine one’s type.

The typical *action* gambler is described as a domineering, manipulative male, who is confident, energetic, and has an IQ over 120. This is the most pervasive type of compulsive gambler in both legal and illegal gambling. The action gambler’s motivation is tied to the goal of beating other individuals at his chosen game and “beating the house.” He seeks to gain wealth and status at the expense of other players and the betting establishment (for example, a casino). These individuals often believe that they can devise a personal “system” to achieve these victories.

Conversely, *escape* gamblers are typically female (according to some estimates, over 90 percent of female pathological gamblers fall in this category). Most are considered to be caring, nurturing, and introverted, with no apparent tendencies toward egotism or narcissism. Their profile

is essentially opposite that of the action gambler. Here, the motivation is relief—escape—from emotional pain, which is a result of present or past trauma.

High-Risk Groups

Organizations that provide help for compulsive gamblers have noted that the problem is growing fastest among two demographic segments: seniors and teenagers. The common denominators between these two groups are that each has relatively large amounts of free time and disposable income. However, the motivation to gamble among each of these groups is age-specific.

Seniors are usually described as “escape gamblers.” They typically gamble in order to escape pain or discomfort in their lives—for example, the loss of a spouse or feeling obsolete after retirement. According to the AZCCG, the casino machines in particular create an anesthetizing quality that temporarily releases them from emotional and even physical pain.

Teenagers most often fall into the category of “action gambler.” They generally gamble for excitement, that is, as an antidote to boredom. As games of chance increase in popularity among youth, peer pressure to follow the crowd is mounting—gambling is now seen as fashionable and trendy. An additional appeal to certain teenagers can be summarized as a “reversal of the pecking order”: The best poker players are often studious introverts, the opposite of the “popular athlete” high school stereotype (“Poker for teens: How far is too far?”, *MSNBC*).

The *International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviours*, based in Montreal, Canada, found that gambling is more popular among teens than other high-risk pursuits such as alcohol abuse, illegal drug use and cigarette smoking (*Fox News*).

A third group that has also experienced a dramatic increase in problem/pathological gambling consists of approximately one-half of the general

population—women. Prior to the early 1980s, gambling among women was widely considered socially unacceptable, with the exception of local bingo games. Gambling was to a great degree a “men’s club.” Before this time, virtually all *Gamblers Anonymous* attendees were male. Currently, however, an estimated *one-third* of compulsive gamblers are women. The large majority of these female gamblers are, like seniors, classified as “escape gamblers” (AZCCG).

What Does It Mean to Gamble?

Is all gambling wrong—or just certain types? Should Christians participate? What does the Bible teach?

First, recognize that God’s Word does not contain the specific command, “Thou shalt not gamble.” On the other hand, neither does it command, “Thou shalt not smoke cigarettes”—yet, it can be proven through the spiritual application of His Word that God forbids smoking. (To learn more, read our article “The Truth About SMOKING.”) In the same way, we can know God’s will regarding Christians and gambling. We simply need to study the laws, examples and spiritual principles found throughout the Bible.

As stated in Part One, gambling involves (1) relying on chance, while (2) risking the loss of something of value in order to (3) gain an advantage—and achieve instant gratification. The higher the stakes, the more reckless the risk involved.

Does this seem compatible with Christ’s statement, “It is more blessed to *give* than to *receive*”? (Notice Acts 20:35; also see Philippians 4:5.)

Samson and the Riddle

Let’s examine a biblical account of gambling: As a faithful servant of God, the mighty Samson was brave and had a gift of supernatural strength—yet he also had a weakness for foreign women of poor character. With his father’s reluctant permission, Samson married a Philistine woman, one who had a tarnished reputation (Jdg. 14:1-3).

A grand seven-day wedding feast was held in honor of the bride and groom. Among the guests were 30 male “companions” provided for the bridegroom by the Philistines (vs. 10-11). According to the custom of the time, these Philistine “friends” were there to protect the wedding party from invading marauders.

Another popular custom of the day was to tell riddles at feasts and special occasions. Samson posed such a riddle to his 30 wedding companions: “I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if you can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. But if you cannot declare it me, then shall you give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments” (vs. 12-13). The Philistine companions accepted Samson’s wager.

Notice: Samson (1) played a game of chance—believing that the odds of the Philistines not solving the riddle were in his favor—and (2) risked the loss of something of value—“thirty sheets and thirty change of garments”—in order to (3) gain an advantage. In other words, Samson gambled big. And he *lost* big.

The Philistine companions cheated, coercing Samson’s new bride into betraying her husband. In doing so, the wife revealed her true character: Given enough pressure, she would betray her husband “in a heartbeat”—even deceiving him and wearing him down with her tears. Samson learned this the hard way. He honored his bet and paid off the cheaters—but he did it through slaughtering thirty other Philistines, taking their fine clothing and giving them to the thirty wedding companions (vs. 15-19).

These were the deadly and disastrous results of Samson’s flirtation with gambling.

“For the Love of Money”

It has been said that there are only two ways of life: The way of GIVE—helping, assisting, serving, showing outgoing concern for others—summed up by the word *love*. And the way of

GET—taking, competing, loving oneself ahead of others.

Which way of life does gambling represent?

Las Vegas is often called “sin city.” A close examination of its history reveals the fingerprints of organized crime, murder, gambling, theft, prostitution, adultery, fornication, drunkenness and illegal drug use. Empowering these are the attitudes of deceit, greed, lust for “instant wealth” and making the “big score,” competition, selfishness, laziness—the way of get, as influenced by the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4) and the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2).

Simply stated, gamblers seek to “get rich quick.” But the apostle Paul warned, “they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. *For the love of money is [a] root of all evil:* which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Tim. 6:9-10).

As described by *Gamblers Anonymous*, “A desire to have all the good things in life without any great effort on their part seems to be the common character pattern of problem gamblers...time is spent creating images of the great and wonderful things they are going to do as soon as they make the big win...servants, penthouses, nice clothes, charming friends, yachts, and world tours are a few of the wonderful things that are just around the corner...”

Investing one’s heart, being and purpose in the single-minded pursuit of money will “drown” one’s spiritual life. And it will truly lead to “many sorrows”—including death!

This is why, in I Timothy 6:11, Paul warns the reader to “flee these things; and follow after righteousness”—to keep God’s commandments (Psa. 119:10, 110, 172; 111:10). This fulfills His Law, through LOVE (Rom. 13:8-10), first toward God, then toward neighbor.

Proverbs 6 admonishes, “Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider her

ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provides her own meat in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest” (vs. 6-8). The ant works and saves. She is productive. She does not waste effort, time or resources on “get-rich-quick” schemes.

The book of Proverbs has much to say about earning a living through hard, honest work:

■ “He becomes poor that deals with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent makes rich” (10:4).

■ “The slothful man roasts not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious” (12:27).

■ “He that tills his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that follows after vain persons [emptiness, idleness, worthlessness] shall have poverty enough” (28:19).

■ “A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that makes haste to be rich shall not be innocent [unpunished]” (vs. 20).

■ “He that *hastens to be rich* has an evil eye, and considers not that poverty shall come upon him” (vs. 22).

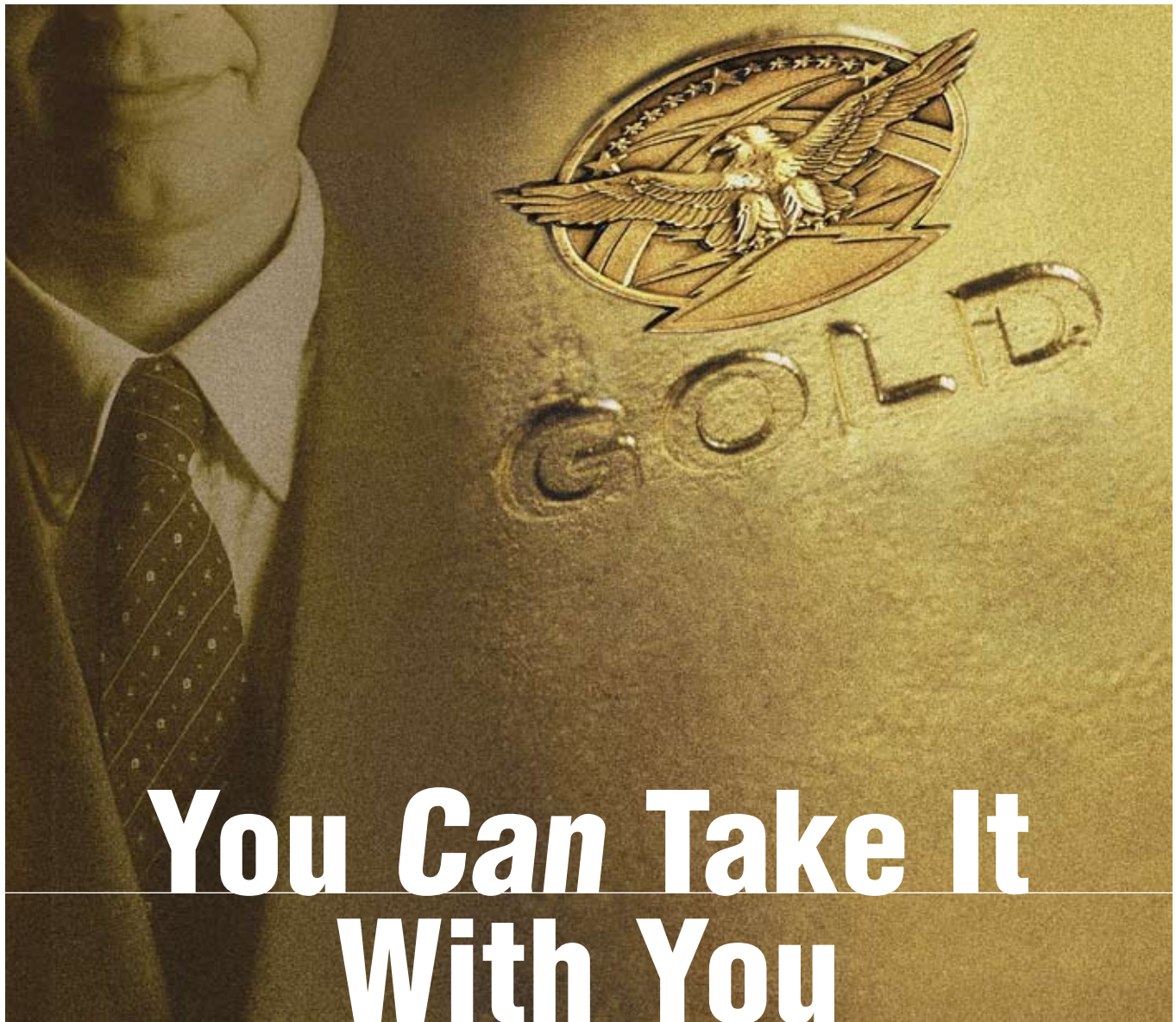
Laziness and taking the “quick and easy” path to material wealth was a problem in the first-century Church. Circumstances among the brethren caused Paul to command that “if any would not work, neither should he eat...Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (II Thes. 3:10, 12).

Hard work and productivity yield patience, longsuffering, endurance and many other godly traits.

Nowhere does God’s inspired Word endorse gambling—foolishly risking something of worth to time and chance in order to get instant wealth! Nowhere do the Holy Scriptures support squandering money away in the pursuit of satisfying the appetites of the flesh!

The reason is simple: Gambling is *foolishness*. And the Bible teaches that

Please see **GAMBLING**, page 20



You *Can* Take It With You

Many seek fame, fortune, power or pleasure, not realizing that these things do not last. They feel that without these, life is unfulfilling. Yet, there is something that *does* last, but nearly all people overlook.

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

WHICH OF THE following would most appeal to you? An opportunity to: (1) receive an astronomical amount of *money*, such as \$1 billion; (2) become a *famous* actor, rock star or athlete; (3) receive great *power*, such as being the

CEO of a Fortune 500 company or the leader of a great nation; (4) be endowed with remarkable *beauty*—or (5) receive perfect *character*?

Which would you choose, and why would you choose it?

Understand that only *one* of these

conditions is permanent. Only one will not fade with time. Only one cannot be taken away from you by circumstances beyond your control. And only one will outlast your physical life.

Does this cause you to reconsider your choice? It should.

Pursuit of Futility

Samuel Butler, a famous English author, declared, “Pleasure...is a safer guide than either right or duty.” It would seem that modern society agrees. Seeking out and doing what *feels* good—pleasure—drives the minds of many, without any notion of resistance to *anything* on the basis of right and

wrong. This thinking ultimately leads to a life of utter futility.

In other words, such a life brings no useful result—like one laboring for the wind (Ecc. 5:16). Though completely unaware of it, the vast majority are living this way—literally chasing after nothing!

Most are aware that life demands *action*—one must wake up each day and purpose to DO something. True happiness cannot be achieved through idleness (though some may speak as if such a life would be “fun”). One’s time must be occupied with worthwhile pursuits. However, for many, the sole purpose of life is the pursuit of *pleasure*.

Most seek *money* as the solution to all their problems, with many even resorting to robbery to obtain it. For example, in 2003, there were an estimated 413,402 robberies in the U.S. alone—just over 47 per hour. A combined total of \$514 million was lost—an average of \$1,244 per victim.

Others, not being satisfied with the amount of money they have, opt for an “easy” route to acquire more, such as lotteries and gambling. For example, in 2003, Americans spent an astonishing \$45 billion on lotteries and \$27 billion on casino gambling. All this money is spent in the hope of “winning big” in order to “live the good life.”

Most fail to consider that even large sums of money can easily be depleted. Consider that “about once a month on average, a hapless millionaire winner of one of the 37 [now 40] state lotteries goes bust and files for bankruptcy, experts say. That’s the rags-to-rags fate of about one-third of all winners” (“Lottery Raises Issues of Cents and Sensibilities,” *New York Post*, November 14, 1997).

Then there are those who seek fame and power, with, of course, wealth being a welcome benefit. Many covet the “big life” that movie stars, rock stars, athletes, CEOs and other top executives seemingly enjoy. It is thought that if fame is achieved, the ultimate “wonderful life” would result.

In a recent *New York Times* article, a former comedian and director explained the typical Hollywood financial story: “When you make money in this town [Hollywood] it’s very fast, *and it feels like it’s never going to end*. I’ve done it myself. I’ve been the [person] who was spending money and then thought, ‘Wow, I haven’t had a job in two years.’” Of course, the money—and the fame and power that yielded it—*does* eventually come to an end!

Many also seek “sex appeal” as a way of life, keeping up with the latest fads and trends. Billions of dollars are spent each year by people seeking to become or remain beautiful. In the fashion and cosmetic industries, new and exciting products and procedures are constantly being introduced, promising breathtaking beauty. Plastic surgery is becoming a booming industry as well, with many *teenagers* seeking to become more attractive. Procedures such as liposuction and botox injections are increasing in popularity.

But, like money, fame and power, beauty will eventually come to an end.

The Bible provides an interesting account of the futility of pursuing pleasures to the extreme. Notice what King Solomon wrote near the end of his life: “So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, *I withheld not my heart from any joy* [pleasure]; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor” (Ecc. 2:9-10). Solomon made it his mission to enjoy every conceivable pleasure. God allowed this so that mankind could learn from his experience.

Here is what Solomon concluded: “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, *all was vanity* [futile] and vexation of spirit [frustration], and there was no profit under the sun” (vs. 11). He continues, “For that which

befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yes, they have all one breath; so that a man has no preeminence above a beast: *for all is vanity* [futile]. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again” (3:19-20).

You Can Take it With You

Solomon came to realize that we all eventually die. There is no escaping this fate. And when death arrives, the things that most pursue (wealth, fame, power, beauty and pleasure) also come to an end.

But there is one thing that *does* survive the grave: CHARACTER!

What is true character? It is the ability to come to the KNOWLEDGE of the right from the wrong—the true from the false—and to *choose* the right, and possess the will to enforce self-discipline to *do* the right and *resist* the wrong.

The reason we were put on earth is to build perfect, righteous character. Ultimately, without character, we are NOTHING.

Understand. God *has* and *is* perfect character. For example, He cannot lie. He has perfect willpower—PERFECT CHARACTER—making it *impossible* for Him to lie (Heb. 6:18). And His goal is to build this same perfect, eternal, indestructible character in *you*. (Our booklet *Why Do You Exist?* explains this, and the purpose of mankind, in more detail.)

Free Moral Agency

Imagine what life would be like if there were no choices or decisions to make, as if you were simply living according to a script. If this were the case, what would be the point of existence?

God designed life to be full of choices—what to eat, what to wear, what to drink—how to live. Throughout any given day, thousands of decisions are made. It can be said that life is as a *series* of choices, with each decision having an impact on *future* decisions. This ability to *choose* is FREE MORAL AGENCY.

Many are somewhat familiar with the account of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Notice: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17). One often-overlooked aspect of this account is that Adam and Eve were given a CHOICE—to eat of a particular tree and *die*, or to avoid it and *live*. God did not *force* them to do what He commanded. Being given a choice is the *only* way to build character.

Because they did not believe God, Adam and Eve decided to eat from the wrong tree. They rejected God’s authority over them and thus were banished from the Garden of Eden. However, their choice not only affected *them*; it caused *all humanity* to be cut off from God.

Like Adam and Eve, you are presented with choices. And like them, the decisions *you* make will affect *others*—even though you may not be able see it.

God realizes that free moral agents *can* reject His rule over them. However, He also understands that only free moral agents can develop His character.

Coming to Right Knowledge

If you look around the world, you will observe confusion—everywhere. There are approximately 6.5 billion people on earth, each having his or her *own* view of right and wrong.

For example, among those who say that taking a human life is wrong, there are various philosophies as to when it would be “right.” Then, there are those who say *lying* is wrong, but think that there are circumstances in which deceit, such as “little white lies,” would be acceptable.

Why do people not agree? Because human beings do not inherently know right from wrong! One may *think* he has all the answers, concluding that a particular idea is correct, ignorant of how wrong he is. Notice: “...the

way of man *is not in himself*: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). In the book of Proverbs, Solomon stated this fact: “There is a way which *seems right unto a man*, but the end thereof are the ways of *death*” (14:12). By taking a cursory look at the society in which we live, the truth of Solomon’s statement, inspired by God, should be most obvious.

God—and ONLY God—can set the standard for right and wrong. As our Creator, He has this authority. If you were to invent a new piece of machinery, you would know for what purpose you invented it. And you would write an instruction manual on how to use it. God designed and created *us*, with the Bible as *our* Instruction Book.

God’s Word lays the groundwork from which to base our decisions. Remember, character involves making the *right* decisions. Not knowing absolute truth would make character-building impossible. The Ten Commandments—God’s great spiritual Law—are absolute truth. Sin is the transgression of God’s Law, with death being the result (I John 3:4; Rom. 6:23).

Simply put, God reveals through the Bible the knowledge of right and wrong.

Doing the Right—Resisting the Wrong

As free moral agents, we possess the will to do what we want, whether right or wrong. Think of *will* as a mental, spiritual muscle, needing to be exercised in order to grow and become strong. Choosing to do right in the face of pain or discomfort—making the tough decision—exercises this muscle, building character. The more this is done, the stronger and more solidified our character becomes. The ultimate goal of a true Christian is to build God’s perfect character. This can only be done by resisting the wrong—no matter the cost.

It can be said that knowledge is knowing WHAT is right; understanding is knowing WHY it is right; and wisdom is DOING IT. You can take it one step further and say that character is doing it REPEATEDLY. Knowledge and under-

standing are important building blocks in attaining wisdom. Without either, there can be no wisdom. However, you can have knowledge and understanding, yet lack wisdom. Knowledge and understanding are useless without wisdom. And wisdom is only of value if it ultimately leads to character.

You may have heard the expression “No decision *is* a decision.” Most put off decisions until a “more opportune time,” using their indecisiveness as an excuse. However, “halting between two opinions” (I Kgs. 18:21) invariably defaults to doing *wrong*.

Also notice the following scriptures: “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes...” (Prov. 21:2) and “...we are all as an unclean thing, and all our [righteousness] are as filthy rags...” (Isa. 64:6). People have the natural tendency to *think* that what they are doing is right. But God views our righteousness—our “morality”—as nothing more than a dirty cloth.

Choose Life

Recognize that there are only two paths in life from which to choose—one leading to life and the other leading to death. After delivering ancient Israel from captivity, showing them many signs and wonders, and giving them His Law, God said, “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before *you life and death*, blessing and cursing: therefore *choose life*, that both you and your seed may live” (Deut. 30:19). In other words, He gave them a CHOICE. If they obeyed Him, great joy would fill their lives. But if they disobeyed, misery would result.

Ultimately, every human being who has ever lived will be confronted with the same choice. The only difference is that the choice will be between *eternal* life and *eternal* death. Pursuing money, fame, power, beauty or personal pleasures as your *sole* purpose in life will bring upon you unhappiness, grief and the feeling of utter futility. In order to travel on the road to true happiness and fulfillment and, ultimately, *eternal life*, right decisions *MUST* be made, and character *MUST* be built. □

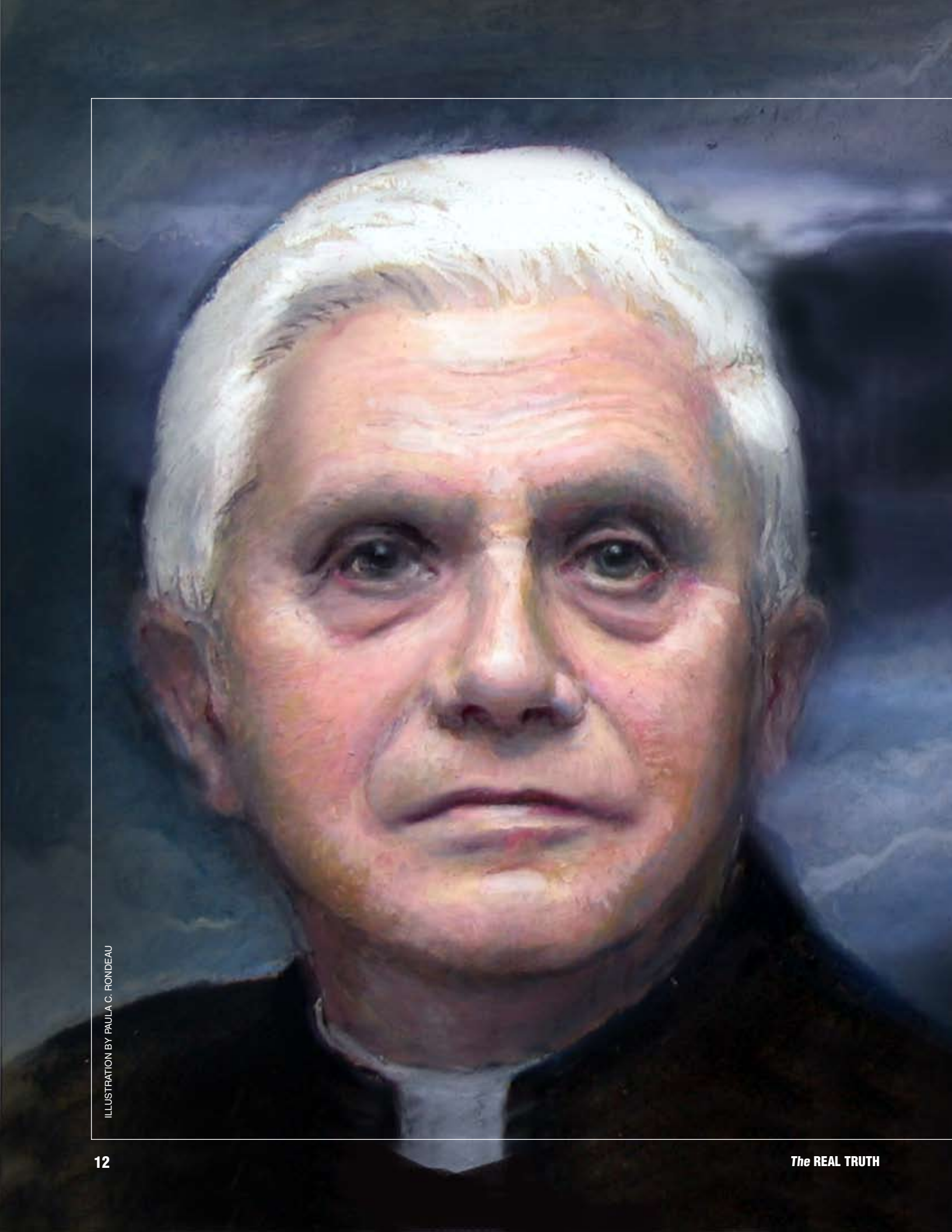


ILLUSTRATION BY PAULA C. RONDEAU

THE WORLD LOOKS TO A NEW POPE

What Will the Future Bring?

A new pope, even more conservative than the late John Paul II, has been elected to reign over the Roman Catholic Church, with its 1.1 billion members. Who is this new religious leader—and what can the world expect from him?

NEWSTHAT Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger had become the newly-elected head of the Catholic Church brought a decidedly mixed reaction from the world.

Most experts believed that the cardinal did not have enough votes to become the next pontiff. They concluded that his decades-long battle against liberalism in the church and his uncompromising stance on sensitive, hot-button issues had polarized the world of Catholicism.

Cardinal Ratzinger's election sent a message to both Catholic hardliners and liberal leaders. The former were pleased with his election, taking it as a signal that church dogma would be firmly upheld. The latter viewed it as a sign that the status quo would be maintained—that the Vatican would not budge from its stance on abortion, homosexuality, same-sex mar-

riage, the ordination of women into the priesthood and other controversial matters.

According to the *Scotsman*, a Vatican source said, "Cardinal Ratzinger doesn't want a pope as right wing as Pope John Paul II. He wants a Pope more right wing than Pope John Paul II. There were a lot of things which the Pope chose to do against the wishes of Cardinal Ratzinger." Most experts agree that the cardinal has been—and, as Pope Benedict XVI, will be—more strongly opposed to liberal teachings than his predecessor.

The *Associated Press* reported that, just days before being elected, Cardinal Ratzinger's native Germany was divided in its opinion of him becoming the next pope: "A recent poll for *Der Spiegel* news weekly said Germans opposed to Ratzinger becoming pope outnumbered supporters 36 percent to 29 percent, with 17 percent having no preference. The poll of 1,000 people, taken April 5-7, gave no margin of error."

Catholic leadership in Germany is largely liberal and had played a highly influential role in establishing Vatican II in the 1960s. Though the 1978 election of Pope John Paul II initially drew broad support from Germany—1.5 million Germans turned out for John Paul's masses—German relations toward the Vatican have since cooled.

It is interesting to note that while most Western newspapers were publishing glowing headlines of the pontiff's election, the British press had a field day attacking him. Headlines such as "From Hitler Youth to PAPA RATZI"—"He was known as GOD'S ROTTWEILER – Now he is POPE BENEDICT XVI"—"God's Rottweiler' is the new Pope"—and "A Pope Who Believes It is Far Better to be Right Than Popular," splashed the pages of newsprint.

Coming of Age in Hitler's Germany

He has been described in various ways by a variety of sources. But who *is* Pope Benedict XVI? What can the world expect from his rule? His admirers look forward to seeing great things, while his detractors expect the worst.

To get a deeper understanding of whom this new religious leader is and what he will likely do, we must look at what he has already done.

Joseph Alois Ratzinger was born in Marktl am Inn, Bavaria, a predominantly Catholic region in Germany, on April 16, 1927. This was the “Holy Saturday” before Easter. His parents were Joseph and Maria Ratzinger. Due to his father’s occupation as a rural policeman, the Ratzinger family often moved from town to town.

In 1939, as World War II intensified and Nazi-led Germany and imperialistic Japan went on the march, young Ratzinger entered seminary. Two years later, he was forced to join the Hitler Youth. At age 16, he was drafted into the military, where he worked in a German anti-aircraft unit that guarded a BMW plant outside Munich. He later helped build tank barriers on the Austrian-Hungarian border. As defeat for the Axis powers drew near, Joseph Ratzinger deserted the army, returning home to Traunstein—just as American troops had established military headquarters at his house. The teenaged German soldier was taken prisoner and placed into a POW camp. Upon his release a few months later, he re-entered the seminary, along with his older brother Georg.

Years later, in June 1951, both brothers were ordained as priests.

A Pivotal Change, an Upward Climb

Two years later, Joseph Ratzinger received his doctorate in theology from the University of Munich. He began teaching theology at the University of Bonn in the late 1950s. He also taught Catholicism at various German universities.

Some years later, in 1962, Mr. Ratzinger was appointed chief theological advisor for the Archbishop of Cologne and came to play a key role at the Second Vatican Council. It has been said that he was, at the time, considered a liberal thinker, but that his progressive positions changed in the wake of student radicalism in Germany in the late 1960s.

In March 1977, he was appointed archbishop of Munich and Freising. He was elevated to cardinal three months later.

In 1981, Pope John Paul II named Cardinal Ratzinger the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. With its roots in the “Holy” Inquisition (see inset), this office was—and still is—the guardian of Catholic orthodoxy.

In 1998, Cardinal Ratzinger was elected vice dean of the College of Cardinals and was elected dean four years later.

For years, he worked as a close ally to Pope John Paul II. Every Friday evening, the two religious leaders would meet alone to discuss problems within the Roman Catholic Church.

For more than two decades, Cardinal Ratzinger built a legacy of zealously upholding and preserving traditional church dogma. He has been called the “intellectual salvation of Roman Catholicism” in a time of confusion and compromise and “the Pope’s enforcer” for rigorously prosecuting ideas considered dangerous to conservative Catholic teaching. Critics have mockingly referred to him as “God’s Rottweiler” and the “Panzerkardinal” (meaning, the “tank cardinal”). He has frequently been accused of being a strict authoritarian who used his office to silence or intimidate dissidents, discipline and demote theologians who were not in step with the Vatican, block liberal movements and expand the borders of papal infallibility within the Catholic world.

Over the years, he repeatedly sparred with leaders of the Catholic Church’s liberal wing. In 1993, the Cardinal of Stuttgart wrote a pastoral letter that gave permission for divorced Catholics who had remarried to take communion. But Cardinal Ratzinger rejected the letter and blocked its distribution (*Ibid.*) And, to the alarm of church liberals, he excommunicated seven women in Austria.

Extensive interviews with leading Catholics—both friends and foes of Pope Benedict—as well as thousands of pages written by and about him, have revealed three things: “He sees his work as a defense of human freedom; he is convinced that he and John Paul are the rightful heirs of

Vatican II; he believes time is on his side” (“The Vatican’s Enforcer,” *The National Catholic Reporter*, April 16, 1999).

Theology, Culture and Other Views of the Pope

Benedict XVI is said to be a man of simple routine. For most of his years at Rome, he has opted to walk alone to work each morning, wearing a simple ankle-length robe, his face blending into the throngs of other clerics. There are stories about tourists who have asked Cardinal Ratzinger for directions, unaware that the person with whom they were speaking occupied one of the most powerful offices in the Vatican, second only to Pope John Paul II.

Though not expected to be as charismatic or telegenic as his predecessor, Pope Benedict has been said to be a “charmer” in one-on-one situations. He is also said to possess a wry sense of humor and is a refreshingly blunt speaker. He has also been called a cosmopolitan and is fluent in at least four—some say as many as ten—languages.

Viewed as an intellectual, he has authored several books that address issues of Catholic faith and doctrine: *The Ratzinger Report* (1985); *Salt of the Earth* (1996); *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (2000); and *God and the World: A Conversation With Peter Seewald* (2002).

In his book *God and the World*, then-Cardinal Ratzinger asserted that followers of religions outside the Catholic Church are in a “gravely deficient” situation. When asked if Jews should or must acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Messiah, he replied, “We believe that,” also stating, “That does not mean that we should force Christ upon them. The fact remains, however that our Christian conviction is also the Messiah of Israel. Certainly it is in the hands of God how and when the unification of Jews and Christians into the people of God will take place” (“Ratzinger speaks out in new book, debate,” *National Catholic Reporter*, Oct. 6, 2000).

During the 2004 American presidential race, Cardinal Ratzinger sent an official letter to Catholic bishops in the U.S. In it, he asserted that public officials who were Catholic, and yet openly dissented from church doctrine on abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, same-sex unions, etc., should not be allowed to partake in Communion. With the democratic presidential challenger being a Catholic who supported legal abortion and other positions opposed by Catholic orthodoxy, many viewed this letter as an attempt by the Vatican to influence American politics.

Cardinal Ratzinger had also weighed in on Europe's political affairs, speaking against Turkey receiving membership into the European Union. He called Turkey a secular Muslim nation that would dilute Europe's professing Christian culture.

The cardinal had spoken out against the "dictatorship of relativism"—the philosophy that all religious beliefs are of equal value—which "does not recognize anything as absolute and leaves as the ultimate measure only the measure of each one and his desires" ("Cardinal Ratzinger Warns of 'Dictatorship of Relativism,'" *Global Catholic News*).

Dealing With Hot-button Issues

Abortion, euthanasia, birth control, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, women in the priesthood, celibacy among priests, pedophile sex scandals, the dwindling size of the Catholic Church in Europe and the U.S.—these and other controversial issues await the attention of Pope Benedict XVI.

Additionally, the new pontiff faces a world in which both Muslims and Catholics claim to have more than one billion believers around the world. He must attend to growing problems among Catholics in Africa and Asia who are concerned with protecting their rights and safety in nations where Muslims are in the majority.

In Latin America, home to almost half of the world's Catholic population, the church must compete with the growing Pentecostal and Evangelical movements that are drawing away its

WHAT IS THE "HOLY INQUISITION"?

Before becoming pope, Joseph Ratzinger headed the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. Few today realize that this office was formerly known as the Holy Inquisition, a Catholic court system that has largely been forgotten since becoming far less active since the late 1600s.

Today, an "inquisition" is defined as an investigation that violates the privacy or rights of individuals and usually includes a harsh, rigorous interrogation.

The Holy Inquisition was, effectively, a church court that investigated and punished heretics. Instituted by Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), it was the first to use coercions and physical punishment. Years later, it was perfected by Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241). His successor, Pope Innocent IV (1241-1254), officially sanctioned the use of torture to extract "confessions" from those suspected of heresy.

Heresy could be any opinion or doctrine that conflicted with the Roman Catholic Church. And anyone—both Catholics and non-Catholics—could be subjected to inquisition. Even if one was *suspected* of being involved in heresy, he could be subjected to torture, without knowing who had brought charges against him. Guilty verdicts were passed down by the church, but punishments were carried out by the civil authority, which was subject to the church. Additionally, all citizens of Catholic-dominated regions were required to inform against heretics. The Holy Inquisition was vigorously administered for more than five centuries.

The Spanish Inquisition, which was a church campaign to purge out the Jews and Moors in Spain, lasted until the mid-19th century. This inquisition has often been referred to as church-sanctioned genocide.

Though the Vatican has not instituted the Holy Inquisition in modern times with the same intensity, as it was centuries ago, it has never publicly apologized for its actions. Strangely, the laws that permit the church to resume a vigorous inquisition are in effect to this day. □

members. In Brazil, which is largely Catholic, less than 10 percent of registered Catholics regularly attend services.

Meanwhile, the church in the United States is still coming to grips with its clergy sex abuse scandals, which have produced an increase of mistrust toward the priesthood. The scandals have also cost the Roman church millions of dollars in legal settlements.

Known for taking defiant stances, Cardinal Ratzinger had this to say about the abuse scandals: "In the Church, priests also are sinners. But I am personally convinced that the constant presence in the press of the sins of Catholic priests, especially in the United States, is a planned campaign, as the percentage of these offenses among priests is not higher than in other categories, and perhaps it is even

lower. In the United States, there is constant news on this topic, but less than one percent of priests are guilty of acts of this type. The constant presence of these news items does not correspond to the objectivity of the information nor to the statistical objectivity of the facts. Therefore, one comes to the conclusion that it is intentional, manipulated, that there is a desire to discredit the Church. It is a logical and well-founded conclusion" (*Zenit News Agency*).

Still another problem the Catholic leader must address is the lack of priests and nuns in the West, as well as congregations that are dwindling in membership.

Along with its American cousins, the Catholic leadership in Europe struggles to address birth control, abortion and same-sex marriage, as well as the growing tide of European secular-

ism and shrinking congregations. Of its 1.1 billion Catholics, 25 percent reside in Europe.

Yet, despite all these mounting issues, Pope Benedict has said that his top priority is to reunify all professing Christians. This intent was foreshadowed in his 2000 homily *Dominus Jesus* ("Lord Jesus"), in which he defined Protestant churches as "ecclesial communities" that are not "churches in the proper sense." In other words, they are not part of the body of Jesus, which Pope Benedict believes is the Roman Catholic Church. In order for professing Christians to receive salvation, they must be grafted back into his church.

During his first week as the Catholic Church's leader, Benedict has repeatedly attempted to reach out to Orthodox Christians and Protestants, and to Jews and Muslims, stating that he would devote his reign to unity.

The Final "False Prophet"?

Certain Internet doomsayers are already assigning grave, apocalyptic signs to Pope Benedict, pointing to an obscure prophecy by St. Malachy, an Irish archbishop. Malachy's Catholic contemporaries believed that he possessed the ability to predict the future.

While visiting Rome in 1139, Malachy supposedly received a vision. In it, he claimed to have seen all 112 future popes, up until the destruction of the Catholic Church and the Second Coming of Christ. Malachy then wrote brief descriptive words about each future pope. According to the bishop's vision, Pope Benedict XVI is the next to last pontiff before Christ's Return.

Malachy-followers point to Cardinal Ratzinger taking the name "Benedict." According to Malachy's prophecy, the next-to-last pope would be "the Glory of the Olive." This, they claim, is tied to the Benedictine Order, known as the Olivetans; its symbol is the olive branch.

Can Malachy's prophecy be true?

God's inspired Word states this: "Knowing this first, that *no prophecy of the scripture is of any private*

interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:20-21).

In Matthew 24, Christ warned that false prophets, along with false prophecies, would rise and deceive many. As the Rock of the Old Testament (I Cor. 10:1-4), He inspired King David to record that those who obey God will receive "good understanding" (Psa. 111:10). This includes the proper knowledge and understanding of true biblical prophecy.

Critics have widely dismissed the Malachy prophecy as being a hoax. Some suggest that it was possibly invented to influence the voting process of a Roman Catholic conclave in the 16th century.

Pope Benedict is *not* a member of the Benedictine Order. In fact, he largely chose to be named "Benedict" after the patron saint of Europe, St. Benedict, who defended Rome against pagan Germanic invaders.

In his homily declared the day before he was elected to head the Catholic Church, the cardinal said the following: "How many winds of doctrine we have known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking... The small boat of thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves—thrown from one extreme to the other: from *Marxism* to *liberalism*, even to *libertinism*; from *collectivism* to *radical individualism*; from *atheism* to a vague religious *mysticism*; from *agnosticism* to *syncretism*, and so forth. Every day new sects are created and what Saint Paul says about human trickery comes true, with cunning which tries to draw those into error. Having a clear faith, based on the Creed of the Church, is often labeled today as a fundamentalism. Whereas, relativism, which is letting oneself be tossed and 'swept along by every wind of teaching,' looks like the only attitude (acceptable) to today's standards. *We are moving towards a dictatorship of relativism* which does not recognize anything as for certain

and which has as its highest goal one's own ego and one's own desires" (emphasis ours).

This, along with other statements, reveals that Pope Benedict XVI sees himself as the spiritual defender against the "isms" of secular thought now prevalent in Europe. In his first official address to the general public, he stated: "The name Benedict evokes, moreover, the extraordinary figure of the great 'patriarch of Western monasticism,' St. Benedict of Nursia, co-patron of Europe together with Saints Cyril and Methodius. The gradual expansion of the Benedictine Order founded by him has had an enormous influence on the spread of Christianity on the whole Continent. Because of this, St. Benedict is much venerated in Germany and, in particular, in Bavaria, my native land. He constitutes a fundamental point of reference for the unity of Europe and a strong reminder of the inalienable Christian roots of its culture and its civilization."

The new pope firmly believes that the greatest threat to professing Christianity is secularism in the West. And, he has stated that he would rather see the Catholic Church reduced to a remnant size than follow the winds of social trends.

Certain religious organizations, specializing in prophetic speculation, have been quick to paint the new pope as the "false prophet" of the book of Revelation and the prophesied "man of sin" of II Thessalonians 2—an end-time religious leader who will perform signs and wonders, deceiving the world into believing that he is God. Such "prophecy groups" take note that the pope's parents were Joseph and Mary (Maria), like Jesus' parents—a sure sign, they say, that he will be a counterfeit of Christ. They also take note that the pontiff is of German descent.

True biblical prophecies picture a future in which a German-led Europe will, in fact, rise to international pre-eminence (see Psalm 83). Other scrip-

Please see A NEW POPE, page 23

Who Publishes This Magazine?

Many ask: Who publishes *The REAL TRUTH*? Here is the answer, which is part of a compelling story of an organization empowered by a deep conviction, derived from understanding that genuinely happy lives can be a reality now—and that a wonderful world is soon to come!

IN 1979, a newspaper reporter contacted a pastor serving a large church congregation in the Northeastern United States, requesting to interview the pastor and attend services. An article was to result from the reporter's interview and his impression of the services he attended. At that time, the Church had come to national attention, and most were generally unaware of its beliefs.

However, the promised article for the newspaper's Sunday edition never appeared. Wondering why, the pastor called the reporter, who confessed that he had originally intended to indict the Church as a cult, but no longer had the heart to do so. When asked why, he explained that seeing so many friendly, happy people disarmed him, and this caused him to abandon his article.

This Church also held the world's largest annual multi-site convention, with over 120 sites spanning the globe. Wherever the Church gathered, it made an enormous impression. One example: The Georgia State Patrol assigned to the convention site at Jekyll Island,

Georgia, indicated that the more than 10,000 church members there were much more manageable than a few hundred people meeting for a nearby law officers convention.

The cooperation of the attendees and the fact that the Church appointed its own traffic, parking and security officials meant the Georgia State Patrol needed no additional help. All other conventions (including the law officers' convention) required substantially more patrolmen, with numerous difficulties for those responsible for maintaining order.

Invariably, reporters everywhere noted that these conventions were a delight to host. They enjoyed seeing so many well-mannered families enter local convention centers. "Unpretentious," "down-to-earth," "happy" and "sincere people radiating an inner peace" were often-used terms describing this Church.

Why is this missing in today's world? What did these people know that everyone else does not? Is there more to this than meets the eye?

Universal Desire

All people long for happy, peaceful, abundant lives. But how many today actually enjoy this kind of wonderful life?

Knowledge is exploding! Mankind

has produced astonishing materialistic progress. Breakthroughs in science and technology have never been greater. But have they been able to bring a rich, full, joyful life to everyone? Have education and the knowledge explosion brought it? Has religion succeeded in producing peaceful, abundant lives worldwide? Have governments found the answers to mankind's truly great questions? Are statesmen providing the example leading to the way that produces true happiness?

In every case, the clear answer is NO!

Vast new frontiers of expanding scientific knowledge have not brought the happiness that leaders prophesied would accompany it. Neither have laborsaving devices, which were supposed to bring people more leisure time to "enjoy themselves." Instead, mental illness, drug addiction, despair, suicide, alcoholism, self-pity, and other forms of escapism—and general discontent with life—abound everywhere.

Immorality and human degeneration have never been worse. The world is filled with problems—famine, poverty, civil unrest, disease, pollution, religious confusion, war, terrorism, crime, debt, ignorance and political upheaval. And things continually grow worse.

Marriage is under assault as never before. Adultery is exploding—traditional home and family life is blurring, in danger of becoming extinct. The vast majority of families are now broken, confused and out of control, with countless children growing up without both parents. Teen-aged pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases are fast becoming the norm. Parents feel helpless in raising moral children in today's immoral world.

Thousands of wars have been fought in the name of religion. Hundreds of millions of lives have been wiped out in the name of peace! Still there is no peace! Humanly-devised solutions always fail to bring lasting peace—anywhere in the world.

At every turn, mankind has bungled and botched all efforts to solve its truly great problems. As a result, humanity suffers from every conceivable evil and ill. Misery, confusion, unhappiness, discontent, and even desperation abound.

But there *is* a way that produces true happiness and peace. Some have found a way of life and are living and following this way that yields joy, contentment, prosperity—and lasting fulfillment.

Yet there are only a few. Why? The answer lies in a basic *law*.

A Great Unseen Law

There are many unseen laws that govern life. For example, everyone understands the law of gravity. If one accidentally drops a brick on his foot, the result could be broken bones. If a skydiver jumps from an airplane, and the parachute fails to open, the result is certain death. This is easy to understand.

Here are some examples of another unseen law that is just as real. If a person is constantly sick, it is obvious that laws of health (proper diet, enough exercise, sufficient sleep, etc.) are being broken. The *effect* of bad health has one or more *causes*. If a marriage ends in divorce, it can also be attributed to one or more causes: Lack of communication, financial woes, death of a child, sexual problems, unhappiness on the job, etc. If someone is arrested for drunk driving, it is not hard to see the *cause* of the arrest.

Most never identify “cause and effect” as a great LAW governing almost every action in life. They are unaware that this is a general principle at work in the world.

Every effect can be traced back to one or more causes. Unwanted or illegitimate pregnancies, crime, drug addiction, bankruptcy and a thousand other effects, can all be linked to specific causes.

But why can man not see this law at work when looking either at the world as a whole or at lives individually? Why has religion also ignored this important relationship between *cause* and *effect*?

There *is* a cause for the conditions of the world and its inhabitants.

However, aware of this, there are some, scattered around the world, living joyful, abundant lives. These people stand out, glowing with genuine happiness, having purpose in their lives. But this is not due to luck or chance—there is a *cause*! Most people ignore right causes—and, as a result, reap a host of bad effects.

God-Centered Way of Life

The cause, for both ends of the spectrum, involves one’s way of life. Those few experiencing happy lives follow God’s Way. They are members of the Church of God, known today as The Restored Church of God, the successor to the Church described in the beginning of this article. Each member is dedicated to LIVING Christianity!

It could be said that there are two different ways of life. One is best described as the “GIVE” way—the way of *love* and *outgoing concern*—God’s way! The other is the opposite or “GET” way—the way of *selfishness* and *self-concern*—the way of this world. For 6,000 years, man has lived his own way—the *get* way.

Most people are interested in enjoying pleasures and accumulating physical things. As has been observed, “Life is about seeing who can die with the most toys.” That may be true of this world, but it is not true of the Christian way.

Christ taught, “It is more blessed to GIVE than to receive.” Practicing *this* way of life leads to the abundance, peace, prosperity, supreme happiness and joy all seek. The Restored Church of God follows the same way that Christ and the original apostles taught.

God’s Law—summarized in the Ten Commandments—can be separated into two basic categories: (1) Love toward God, as expounded in the first four commandments. Christ summarized them in Matthew 22:37:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” and (2) love toward fellow man, summarized in the last six commandments: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (vs. 39).

Practicing—*living*—God’s Way is the CAUSE of the happiness of those in this Church. Each member, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is dedicated to living the way of GIVE—the God-centered way of life. The Restored Church of God is a united body of people focused on making a difference in the lives of individuals. It is determined to help others, to teach them this same way.

The happiness that true Christians experience is not a shallow, false happiness. It runs deep in the life of each member. Why? Because a God-centered way of life produces this!

God—the Creator of all life on earth—gave mankind a detailed *Instruction Manual* containing vital information, explaining *what* we are, *why* we are, and *where* we are going. While the manuals and textbooks of institutions of higher learning teach students *how to make a living*, man’s Maker teaches him *how to live*, through His Word—the Holy Bible. God’s people are dedicated to following His Word and living by every principle that derives from it. They live these principles and experience the effects—happy marriages and families, productive lives and careers, contentment and fulfillment.

But what about the rest of the world? Again, *why* is there so much evil today? *Why* the increasing crime, unrest, rioting, wars and violence? *Why* is immorality exploding? *Why* do over half of marriages in today’s society fail?

Civilization has lost—ignored—crucial information!

Knowledge Was Lost

Humanity has lost the knowledge of God’s way of life and how to live it. Man does not know *why* he is, *what* he is and *where* he is going. Society has lost the understanding that brings hap-

piness and joy. It does not know the way to peace (Rom. 3:17; Isa. 59:8).

Why is this?

As simple as this may sound, the cause of all the world's troubles began in the Garden of Eden. God had created all things and also had taught Adam what is right and wrong—but Adam insisted on deciding right and wrong for himself. Humanity has followed Adam's decision—and way—and been miserable ever since!

The world has lost sight of a decision made by Adam and Eve. They chose not to eat of the Tree of Life, which God had told them they could freely do, choosing instead to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Again, mankind ever after has followed in their footsteps—the way of GET.

This explains a modern world filled with troubles, evils and ills! The knowledge and understanding of God's Way became lost.

From Creation, until the First Coming of Jesus Christ, only a few followed *God's* instructions regarding right and wrong. Adam's son Abel chose the right way of life. Several generations later, Enoch walked with God. His great-grandson Noah was the only person of his day who followed God. His son Shem followed in his footsteps. Soon after the flood, there was Abraham, the father of the faithful. Following him were Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

In the time of Moses, God raised up His nation, Israel. He made a covenant with the Israelites, yet soon after, they rebelled. While God attempted to have the Israelites follow His Way, they rejected Him. At the same time, the rest of the world continued in the original way that Adam and Eve chose.

This was the world before Christ—one in which only a tiny few walked with God. Almost all had rebelled, and the knowledge of God's Way was lost to the vast majority. This was a world needing a Savior to reconcile it to its Creator. It was during this period that many prophets brought the *good news* of a Messiah—soon to come with a message to the world.

The Messenger and His Announcement

Jesus came not to save the world and rule as King *then*. But rather, He came as a Messenger with an announcement. His message was the gospel—the GOOD NEWS—of the coming kingdom of God.

In order to announce the coming kingdom of God, Christ had to first overcome Satan, the god of this world. This would qualify Him to *replace* Satan and become King of God's soon-coming kingdom.

He also came to reconcile mankind to the Father. From the moment Adam and Eve rejected God, humanity has been cut off from God—and from the knowledge of the give way, which produces the good things in life. Being perfect, Christ gave His life for humanity. By His sacrifice—His death—He paid the penalty for the sins of all.

The kingdom that Christ announced is the world government of Almighty God, soon to come, which will rule all nations and bring everlasting peace and prosperity. *This* gospel message included the fact that, upon repentance and faith, people could become God's begotten children. Then, after a lifetime of overcoming, growing and giving, these begotten children would one day be born again, entering God's kingdom.

Birth of the Church and God's Work

Christ understood and taught His disciples that of Himself He could do nothing. The Spirit of God enabled Him to accomplish all that He did. Prior to His ascension to heaven, Christ told His disciples He would send them God's Spirit.

This event, the beginning of the Church of God, occurred in A.D. 31. Christ described the significance of that event: "But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." God then gave His Holy Spirit to 120 disciples.

The Work of God also began at this same time. Delivering to the world the

gospel—the GOOD NEWS of the coming kingdom—has always been the Work of God! Infused with the Holy Spirit, God's people were now empowered to fulfill His mission.

Christ stated, "I will build My Church." This goes far beyond just beginning, increasing and caring for it. There is a great transcendent purpose for the Church Christ built!

God's Work—The Mission

Christ's Church has a mission. Every member is called to become a part of the exciting Work of God.

This mission—this Work of LOVE—has a two-fold commission. The First Commission is "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The Second Commission is to feed the flock of God—to supply each member of God's Church with spiritual food (John 21:15-17). As God's members are fed, they grow spiritually, allowing them to serve and dedicate themselves more to the great First Commission.

Fulfilling the First Commission is far more complex today than in the age in which the original apostles lived. However, teaching in the information age is also more exciting. Vast amounts of knowledge travel at incomprehensible speed. Within all this information is the refreshing knowledge of God's way of life. The Restored Church of God is spreading the gospel at a rate and efficiency that the Church has never before seen. Great numbers of people can now learn as much as they want, when they want. Thousands around the world are learning sound, proven principles, straight from their Bible, helping them to live happier lives and become better citizens.

This magazine—*The REAL TRUTH*—produced by The Restored Church of God, plays a vital role in fulfilling the First Commission. To learn more about The Restored Church of God and its mission, read our booklet *Here is The Restored Church of God*.

In the next issue of this magazine, we will further address the question: Where is God's true Church? □

GAMBLING

Continued from page 8

even “the *thought* of foolishness is SIN” (Prov. 24:9).

Just a superficial investigation shows that the odds are definitely stacked against the gambler. For example, the odds of winning the Grand Prize in the largest multi-state lottery are listed as 1 in 120,526,770—astronomical! Also, gambling establishments such as casinos are assured to be “in the black” due to what is called the “house edge.” This is defined as the ratio of the gambler’s average loss to his or her initial bet. This percentage of loss on games such as blackjack and poker can vary from 0.02% to almost 19%. Slot machines are *programmed* to make a profit of up to 15 cents per dollar inserted, and the house edge for Keno ranges from 25 to 29%! Whether “the house” is taking the gambler’s money in most cases is not a question—it is a mathematical certainty! It is foolish to ignore this reality in pursuit of a selfish fantasy.

Yet, human reasoning will ask, “What about low-risk gambling, like bingo, raffles and office pools? Surely, there’s nothing wrong with a ‘friendly’ wager now and then—right?”

Wrong!

ALL gambling is wasteful, unproductive and foolish—and contrary to what the Bible teaches. Even low-risk gambling is sin; it breaks God’s Law. Notice that God’s Word states that even “a *little* leaven leavens the whole lump” (I Cor. 5:6).

Those who are led by God’s Spirit will seek to obey the spirit of the Law, not merely the letter. They will diligently follow God’s will and reject all human reasoning, for they know—and believe—that “the heart is *deceitful above all things*, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9), and “the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (10:23), and “There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25).

Ultimately, the basic motivation of the gambler is *covetousness*—a desire for that which belongs to others. Speaking of the modern nations of the West, God states, “For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness” (Jer. 6:13). The possessions and status that the gambler longs for become his “god”! *Anything* that one gives deference to above his Creator becomes his god (Ex. 20:3).

What About the Stock Market?

Some have wondered if purchasing stocks is wrong. Generally, no. When done in moderation, with conservative companies that have reliable financial track records, this can be a method of wise investment. But the motivation must not be to “get rich quick.”

Today, many employers provide the option of buying company stocks, sometimes at a discount. If you have

These publishing professionals have a vested interest in that company’s success. They want to ensure that this line will continue to “push the envelope” in producing better, faster, easier-to-use, cutting edge computers.

Investing in a company whose products you regularly use and trust is not gambling, but it must always be done in moderation.

Consider Christ’s example. In Matthew 25 and Luke 19, He expected His faithful servants to increase the talents that were given to them. In the parable, Christ saw nothing wrong with going to money exchangers—banks that handled money for profit—to get a higher return.

With these examples in mind, we must also understand this: While not gambling, buying stocks can, after a certain point, become just another “get rich quick” scheme. It must always be done with wisdom and restraint.

“Any type of trading based on fast-paced rumor and innuendo, relying solely on time and chance...is directly akin to gambling.”

the opportunity to take part in this, you would be investing in your employer’s future—as well as your own. Therefore, this would not be considered gambling. But, of course, you should be prudent and conservative.

Here is another example: In the world of newspaper and magazine publishing, most designers and artists use one particular brand of computer and its related software. Despite the fact that there are far more Windows-based computers and applications available, and usually at a cheaper price, there is among these creative professionals a firm, diehard loyalty to this line. Therefore, it is no surprise that many designers, graphic artists and illustrators invest in the parent company that designs and manufactures this particular computer system.

Any type of trading based on fast-paced rumor and innuendo, relying solely on time and chance (like day trading and commodity markets), is directly akin to gambling. These involve foolishly—and recklessly—risking money to accumulate quick wealth.

It’s All in How You Play

It is human nature to go to extremes. But Christians must be balanced in all things. Recognize that bingo, rolling dice, card playing, etc., are wrong only *if* they involve wastefully and foolishly risking something of value or worth (no matter how small) in order to make a quick profit.

For example, in most cases, bingo matches (especially those sponsored by the churches of this world) require

players to pay a nominal fee in order to play. This is gambling, regardless of the size of the fee. However, playing bingo is not gambling IF one is allowed to play *for free*, where nothing of worth or value is *at risk*.

Taking part in a raffle may appear harmless, but it can generate the desire to gain for yourself what others have contributed. Therefore, like all other types of gambling, this is self-centeredness and “covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5).

On the other hand, a draw that comes as a *bonus* of purchasing tickets for a dance, for example, is not gambling, as long as it does not involve

winning at someone else’s expense. The same applies to a promotional draw, in which the winner is picked and purchasing a ticket is not required. Remember, gambling is the way of getting, competing, taking and focusing on self at the expense of others.

It is not practical to list every possible scenario involving games of chance. However, if one is required to “pay to play” (such as in lotteries) or risk losing something of value, then this is gambling.

When All Is Said and Done

Gambling is not of God—and is clearly unchristian in purpose. It reflects the

way of GET—the way of competition, strife, lust, greed, instant gratification, selfishness and laziness—the mindset of carnal human nature. All betting, from penny ante wagers to high stakes risk-taking, is reckless and foolish, and therefore, sin.

The principles found in Scripture make plain that God created man to be productive, to work, earn, save and build, and give to others—never to squander our resources or covet those of our neighbor.

In summary, Christianity and gambling are utterly incompatible. By God’s standards, ALL gambling is pathological! □

LOTTERIES AND CASTING LOTS

When playing the lottery, people buy tickets in certain combinations of numbers, hoping to win the multiple millions of dollars that await the next winner. The odds against winning are astronomical, but such logic never stands in the way of determined ticket buyers. Their eyes are on the “big prize.”

Believe it or not, this modern carnal use of lotteries is a perversion of the biblical practice of “casting lots.”

Leviticus 16 records how ancient Israel, “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38), was to observe the Day of Atonement. During this annual Sabbath, two identical goats were to be brought before the door of God’s holy tabernacle (vs. 7). Then lots were cast: “...one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the [e]scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’s lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering” (vs. 8-9). This goat represented Jesus Christ, and was put to death (vs. 15).

“But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the [e]scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a [e]scapegoat into the wilderness” (vs. 10). This goat represented Satan and pictures a time when he will be cast away from civilization. One day soon, the devil will no longer be able to infect an unsuspecting humanity with his carnal attitudes.

There is a reason why God used lots to make His choice clear: Just as these two goats were identical in the eyes of the Israelites, men throughout history have confused Satan with Christ. As a result, people have also confused the ministers of this world with God’s true servants. “And



no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness” (II Cor. 11:14-15).

When it comes to spiritual matters, people cannot rely on what *they* think or feel. They need God to reveal the difference between Christ and Satan—between the way that leads to eternal life in God’s kingdom and the way that leads to sorrow, misery and eternal death.

The Israelites cast lots to determine which portions of the Promised Land God wanted the tribes of Israel to take (Num. 26:52-56; Jos. 15; 18:10).

The original apostles (who had the authority to do this) cast lots to seek God’s will in filling the office left vacant by Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:22-26).

Unfortunately, lots have also been cast for devious and selfish purposes. As Christ bled to death on the cross, Roman soldiers cast lots for His clothing (John 19:23-24). And at the end of the age, the enemies of the U.S., Britain and the other modern-day nations of Israel will cast lots to commit evil. But God will not be in their decisions, which is why He will later punish these nations (Joel 3:1-3; Obad. 8-11; Nahum 3:7-10).

As you can see, the modern lottery craze is a satanic perversion of a tool once used to seek God’s will.

Today, we can know the will of God through daily Bible study (accompanied by fervent prayer, and fasting regularly), reading the literature of His Work, seeking a multitude of wise counsel (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; 24:6), and by listening to and applying the sermons God feeds us every Sabbath and Holy Day. □

WORLD NEWS DESK

AN EDITORIAL ANALYSIS OF WORLD NEWS, TRENDS AND CONDITIONS



GEOPOLITICS, STRATEGIES & ECONOMIES

Middle East War in 2006?

During a recent visit to the United States, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon warned President George W. Bush and his administration of the rising prospect of war in the Middle East in 2006. With the U.S. expected to withdraw from Iraq that year and Iran becoming increasingly defiant, the concerns are legitimate: "It is the biggest nightmare of [Prime Minister]

Ariel Sharon," a U.S. official said. "He has relayed repeated messages to the administration that Iran and its Arab allies were preparing for war."

Equipped with satellite photos, Mr. Sharon told Messrs. Bush and Cheney that Iran had nearly reached the point of nuclear weapons capability.

According to U.S. officials, the administration has decided to give the

European Union negotiation tactic until the end of this year to provide substantial results.

Once again, the Israeli Prime Minister also requested assurances that his country would continue to receive military support from the U.S. to deter and defend itself against regional threats.

Source: *The World Tribune*

An al-Qaeda Nuclear Threat?

Intelligence reports concerning an al-Qaeda nuclear threat are once again prominent in the news, and the fact that the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) has distributed several classified reports regarding this since December indicate increased concern about it. In fact, the reports state that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has indeed obtained a nuclear device and is storing it in Afghanistan, waiting for the "right moment."

In February, in a congressional testimony, senior U.S. intelligence and security officials stated that a future terrorist attack involving nuclear, chemical or biological weapons is likely. CIA Director Porter J. Goss said such a terrorist strike "may be only a matter of time."

Source: *The Washington Post*

Strained Relations Between China and Japan

Relations between Asia's two giants exploded in recent days, as both Japan and China hurled accusations and insults across the sea that divides them. Historically, the animosity between these two peoples runs deep. The recent tensions are a result of Japan publishing new history schoolbooks, which gloss over that nation's wartime history. In addition, there are gas-line rights being disputed, as well as Japan's intentions to garner a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Protests across China were violent at times, damaging Japanese businesses, vehicles and even its embassy. The two countries are bound by billions of dollars in trade, aid (Japan still gives financial assistance to China) and investment. Yet Japanese requests for an apology and compensation for damage caused by the recent protests were promptly snubbed by Chinese officials.

The *CIA Factbook* ranks China's military budget as second, and Japan's as fifth, in the world. Could these be akin to two heavyweights trading insults before a fight?

Of course, the implications to the U.S. are immense, as Japan has been a staunch U.S. ally in the region since World War II, particularly in recent years. Yet the U.S. is also bound to China by billions of dollars in trade and investment.

Source: *Associated Press*



Europe in Crisis

As has been reported here before, Europe has been approaching, and may now be at, a socio-political crisis. William Pfaff wrote: "It involves the political and organizational complexities of a measured yielding of sovereignties, but its roots are in the cultural and even moral identity and allegiance of millions of individuals."

The crisis centers around the ratification of the new European Constitution, which has been completed by several of the smaller EU member-states, as well as Italy, but has yet to be done by the major states, some of which will hold national referendums first.

For example, in France, a found-

ing nation of the EU heavily involved in the new constitution, recent polls suggests that their referendum (to be held May 29) will not pass with a favorable vote. Some analysts believe that these referendums will have little to do with the actual constitution. Most have not read it, and national media outlets have superimposed other issues on the vote. Does it, for example, "Americanize" Europe? Does it strengthen Europe against threats from the U.S. or



Russia? The people of Western Europe generally feel one way, while those in Eastern Europe differ.

It is understood that Europe is more than an economic system. It has progressed too far to be any less, and Bible prophecy clearly indicates otherwise. The likely outcome of some

EU member-states' inability to ratify the constitution is the appearance of several "Europes"—one of which will prove to be dominant.

Source: *The International Herald*

RELIGION

Catholicism in Russia

In recent years, the Catholic Church has made significant public relations inroads in Russia. A poll surrounding the death of John Paul II indicated that 30 percent of Russians have a favorable opinion of Catholicism—almost *double* the figure of only five years ago. Those that have a nega-

tive opinion also dropped from nine to five percent. The poll was conducted April 9-10 in 100 cities and towns throughout 44 of the major municipalities of Russia, gathering the opinions of 1,500 respondents. Nearly half (46 percent) of those polled considered the death of John Paul II to be a loss

for the entire world, and respondents also most frequently mentioned his peacemaking activities as his leading merit. Half of those surveyed also believed that the authority of the Catholic Church had increased during the reign of Pope John Paul II.

Source: *Zenit News Agency*

A NEW POPE

Continued from page 16

tures show that ten European nations or groups of nations will hand over the reigns of power to one man, whom the Bible calls "the beast." This end-time European leader will be endorsed by a figure called the "man of sin."

Notice: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [Christ's Return – vs. 1] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and *that man of sin be revealed*, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, *showing himself that he is God*. Remember you not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what withholds *that he might be revealed in his time*...And then

shall that Wicked [one] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is *after the working of Satan* with all POWER and SIGNS and LYING WONDERS, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them *strong delusion*, that they should *believe a lie*: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thes. 2:3-12).

A startling television documentary, *Does Europe Hate Us?*, hosted by *New York Times* columnist and Pulitzer Prize winner Thomas L. Friedman, stated that Europe now has the economic muscle to financially overshadow the United States. However, it

does not have the will to compete with the U.S. militarily—yet.

(Does the new pontiff fit the role of the "man of sin" and "the false prophet"? *The REAL TRUTH* magazine is not a publication that resorts to wild speculation or prophetic innuendo. Its chief purpose is to analyze world news and societal trends affecting humanity-at-large—from a sound, biblical perspective, and this includes basic prophecies that are coming alive in our time.)

Before becoming pope, Joseph Ratzinger produced a legacy of rigidly holding firm to strong Catholic dogma and tradition. He has refused to bend to the cries for liberal reforms and has not shied away from silencing and disciplining liberals who have dissented from conservative, traditional religious thought. There is every reason to believe that he will continue the same course of action as head of the Roman Catholic Church. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

form of human existence, and sex is only for procreation, it would seem to be much better for unmarried people to only come together for sex and procreation, before returning to celibacy. Remember, most professing Christians are also taught that any birth control is wrong! This belief derives from the “sex is dirty and only for procreation” idea.

Do you see the logic? If traditional religion is correct, and sex is only for procreation—and if celibacy is a higher state of being—then marriage has absolutely no value. And make no mistake, there is plenty of reproduction taking place without marriage (now one in three, just in America). Understanding the God-ordained purposes of sex eliminates much ignorance and confusion about marriage.

Traditional Christianity—completely deceived on nearly every biblical point—has utterly failed its followers—and the world—by teaching the fallacies we have just described. Sadly, when it comes to sex, marriage and celibacy, most believe the falsehoods of deceived men who claim to be God’s representatives, but who know little or nothing of His true teachings.

Is God the Authority?

The Bible is written by One professing to be God. This “One” leaves no doubt as to His authority and power, and that He created everything: “I am the Eternal, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me...Thus says the Eternal, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, ask Me of things to come concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands command you Me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded” (Isa. 45:5, 11-12).

This statement is not ambiguous. If we are to accept the Bible, God establishes Himself as the One who has authority to answer life’s BIGGEST QUESTIONS!

In the same passage, God continues to establish Himself as the Author of the Genesis 1 creation account: “For thus says the Eternal that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it...I am the Eternal; and there is none else...who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I the Eternal? And there is no God else beside Me...I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto Me every knee shall bow...” (vs. 18-23).

These are very strong words. They are either true or false—they cannot be both. You need to know which, because all who are unwilling to investigate—to even consider—what God says will one day be required to “bow the knee” before the God they rejected (Phil. 2:10). Since sex is such a big part of the human experience and existence—and even the very centerpiece of so many lives today—the God of the Bible would have much to say about its use and purposes, and whether it is for exclusive use in marriage.

It is possible to prove both that God exists and that the Bible is His Word. (You may read our booklet *BIBLE AUTHORITY...can it be proven?* to prove that the One who speaks from the pages of the Bible has authority—and that the Bible is, in fact, God’s Word. Prophecy is only one of the proofs of the Bible’s divine inspiration that this booklet discusses. Also, our carefully prepared booklets *EVOLUTION – FACTS, FALLACIES AND IMPLICATIONS* and *Does God Exist?* prove the folly of evolution.)

Great Purpose Revealed!

Evolutionists are stymied—and trapped!—within the boundaries of their theory. They see no greater reason for the birth of a human than of a puppy or a giraffe. If, as they assert, human beings are merely the highest of animals, and products of blind, dumb evolution, it is impossible for them to simultaneously believe in an over-arching or transcendent, God-ordained purpose for human life. The two positions are opposites. No one can honestly accept both!

Though often of exceptional intelligence, the evolutionist’s dependence on human reasoning, accompanied by rejection of revealed knowledge, leaves him utterly incapable of knowing God’s awesome purpose for humanity. Men have literally shut themselves out of true understanding! They do not know—they simply do not *and cannot* know the purpose of sex.

This volume is written to those who will consider what God reveals, not to the unwilling. God reveals that marriage and sex have an awesome purpose completely beyond the bounds of human imagination. After hearing God’s explanation, you be the judge of whether it makes more sense than that which is offered by evolutionists and traditional Christianity.

Remember, if you will not accept God’s revealed Word, you are left with no choice but to be ignorant of how and when marriage began, and the purposes of sex within it. You must accept that marriage is either a human invention on the road of evolution, or for no purpose other than procreation because celibacy is a “higher calling.” These are your only options! The marvelous answers, available here, to the great questions of marriage and sex remain shrouded in mystery.

True Values

The world has been devoid of right values—true values, which would have brought it to enjoy every wonderful and good thing that a loving God could give to His creation. God is a parent. And like human parents with their children, He has wanted His children to enjoy all the good things that He could provide for them.

The problem is that God’s children have ingested false values, having wandered out of the house and into the neighborhood where they absorbed the thinking of different “parents.” For generations, humanity has sought the wrong goals, with the wrong purposes in mind. Even though it has reaped a host of wrong results, and pain of every imaginable sort, it has not sought to examine the foundation upon which it stands—WRONG VALUES.

Just a short time ago, none could have dreamed that so many today would be choosing a variety of “alternative lifestyles,” and that many centuries of basic marriage values and customs would be under attack—challenged, lampooned and ridiculed as out-of-date. With many abandoning the once-sacred institution of marriage, and the wholesale loss of traditional values, many are left confused, not knowing where to turn for *answers*.

Why is all of this happening?

The Bible is filled with true doctrines. Each has a counterpart—counterfeit or substitute—that has been accepted by the world at large. These include the gospel, the nature of salvation, punishment in the afterlife, which day of the week Christians should keep holy, observance of men’s holidays or God’s Holy Days, and many others.

PALESTINIAN

Continued from page 5

In addition, because of his advanced age, Mr. Abbas is seen as a transitional leader; and it is not clear who would replace him.

Many in the Middle East want a peaceful solution to this conflict. Over the years, many thousands have died in bloody attacks. Many Palestinians live in abject poverty, and their economy has been devastated.

Most Palestinians are weary of the violence and the economic collapse it has brought. The Israelis are tired of being considered “occupiers” and “oppressors.” Both sides desire to see peace come to the region.

Will There Be Peace?

Already, events are taking place that could worsen relations between the Palestinians and Israelis. The Israelis are planning to expand settlements in the West Bank with the building of 3,500 new homes in 2005—a move seen by the Palestinians as a provocation. Also, the newly reconvened Sanhedrin (Jewish legal/religious assembly) has been discussing the building of a temple

Each requires one to not only learn the truth of the doctrine or teaching being studied, but to also unlearn the common, popular errors taught about it.

It is the same with sex. Recognize that you have been trained—actually conditioned—in wrong knowledge and values. Not only do you need to learn the truth of when and why sex, but you have to be prepared to unlearn all of the error that has been pumped into you. You must be reconditioned to the truth about sex. As you would with any other teaching, this means that you must be prepared to wash your mind from all assumptions and error.

Mr. Armstrong’s book contained explicit drawings and diagrams. This one does not. This is because it is posted on the Internet and therefore it becomes available to those under 18 years of age. In addition, there are more relatively

on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and the offering of sacrifices there. This is the site of the Dome of the Rock (containing the al-Aqsa mosque), considered to be Islam’s third holiest site.

If a temple (or an altar) is built and sacrifices are offered, Israel could face attack from several enraged Arab/Muslim nations who would consider such an act to be a desecration of a sacred place. Such an attack could have dire consequences for mankind, as it is widely believed that Israel secretly built up an arsenal of nuclear weapons in the latter half of the 20th century. If faced with defeat and possible extinction, Israel could quickly escalate the conflict to an all-out nuclear war (often called the “Samson Option”).

Many have long speculated as to what will happen in the Middle East, but the Bible is the only source that has accurately foretold world events throughout history. It has predicted monumental events such as the rise of the ancient Roman Empire, the emergence of the U.S. and Britain as superpowers, the impending rise of a European superstate and the establishment of the nation of Israel.

God’s Word shows that peace will *not* come to the Middle East before the

detailed manuals now available than ever before, greatly reducing the need for such illustrations.

A couple of points to consider before continuing. The reader may be familiar with the fact that The Restored Church of God has prepared a number of books, booklets and brochures that speak to the many different aspects of marriage, sex, the family, childrearing, dating and courtship and other related topics. (If not, it is hoped that you will take the time to explore all that we offer.) There are some few paragraphs that are basically repeated between books for help in a different context. These brief overlaps are important to what is being covered. (Also remember that this volume is a companion to our book *All About DATING and COURTSHIP*, and each is incomplete without the other.) □

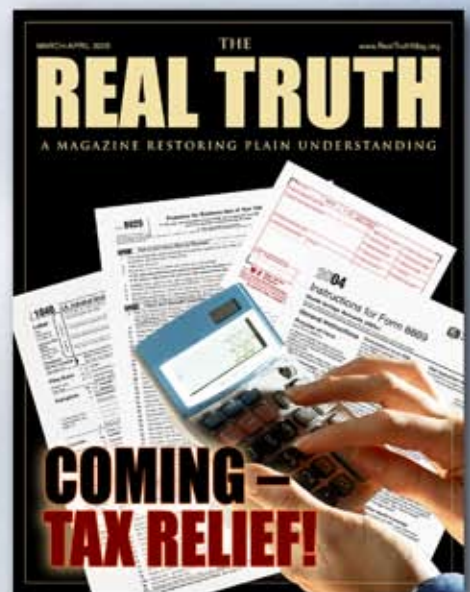
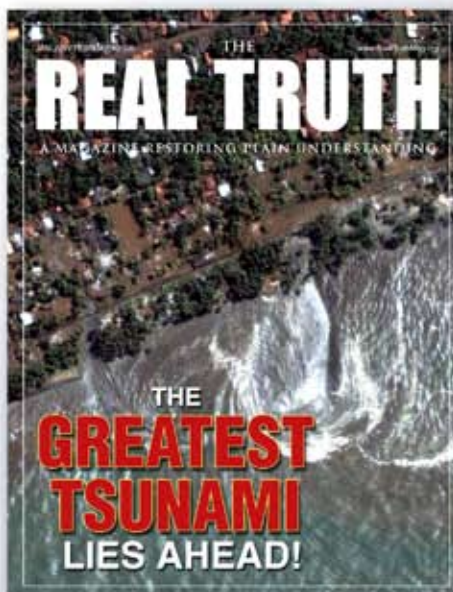
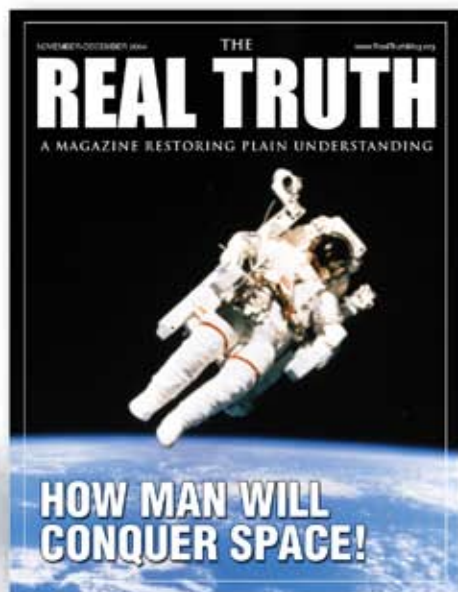
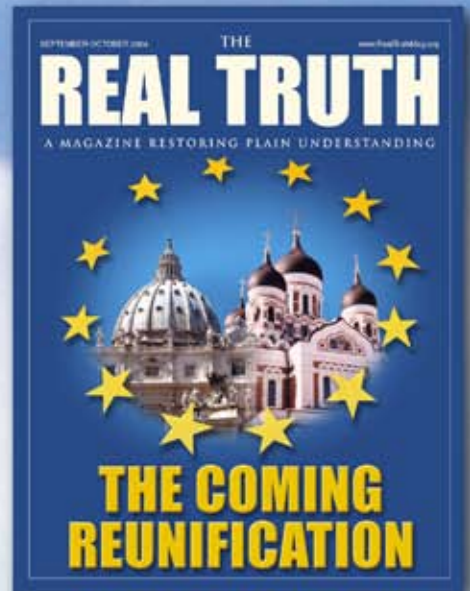
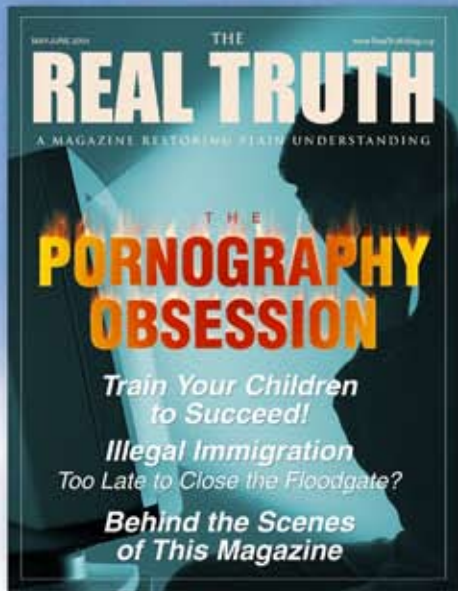
Return of Christ. Instead, it reveals that a crisis will occur at the end of the age: A number of Arab/Muslim nations, allied with Europe, will conspire against and attack Israel (Psa. 83:1-8). Eventually, the nation of Israel will be overrun by the “King of the North” (the European Union) and the Jews will be taken captive (Dan. 11:40-41) during the worst time of trouble the world has ever seen.

Jerusalem has long been a source of contention between nations, as it is considered to be a holy city by three major world religions—Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The Bible has foretold that all nations contending over Jerusalem will be cut to pieces (Zech. 12:2-9). Scripture shows that the Palestinians and Israelis will not establish a permanent peace before Jesus Christ returns. The hatred and mistrust is too deep.

But the good news is that Jesus Christ *will* return and finally establish lasting peace through the world-ruling kingdom of God. At that time, Palestinians, Israelis and all humanity will learn to live with each other in peace and harmony (Isa. 2:2-4).

Read our booklet *The MID-EAST in Bible Prophecy* to learn more about what will happen in the Middle East in the near future. □

Have you missed out on previous issues?



You can read them online at your convenience!