

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2005

THE

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

**BUILD
A HAPPY
MARRIAGE**

Here's how!

**HURRICANE KATRINA:
A SPECIAL ANALYSIS
OF THE AFTERMATH
PAGE 14**

THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. III | NO. 5 | SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2005

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Most married couples lack *true* happiness—and have no idea how to build it. GOD instituted the marriage covenant—and the *principles* governing its success. Without them, *real* happiness is impossible. With them, you can experience a boundless JOY you have never known!

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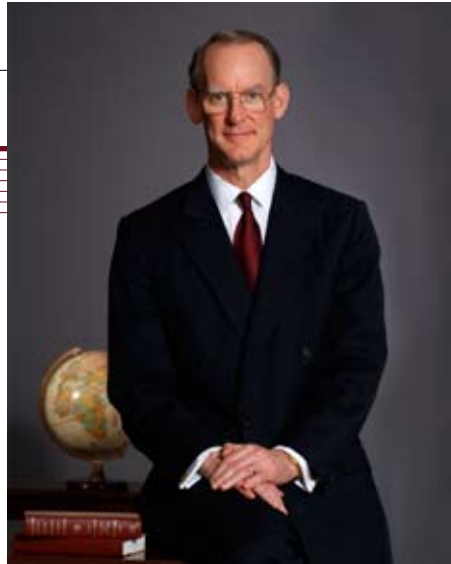
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



A Happy Marriage—Possible?

HOW MANY *truly* happy married couples do you know?—and are you even sure of these? Is *your* marriage happy? Are you enjoying the life you anticipated? Statistics suggest the answer is probably “No.”

Most married people are *unhappy*—with many a virtual study in misery. They have no idea what to do about it or where to turn for answers. Millions stumble along, bouncing off one marital problem into another, never knowing how to address them—let alone **SOLVE** them!

Married life has been the brunt of endless jokes, where traditional conduct and the roles of husbands and wives are ridiculed—and depicted as a bondage that only foolish people enter. Many equate marriage to surrendering their “freedom” to a lesser, unhappy state of existence.

Others choose to marry, sincerely believing they will find perfect bliss—they will “live on love”—only to discover that true happiness is far from automatic. Some even conclude, often within days, that marriage was the worst decision of their life.

Sadly, so many enter marriage with no understanding, no preparation, no training and no idea of how to achieve a lifetime of happiness with their chosen partner. Many couples spend far more time planning for a one-day *wedding* than for the lifelong *marriage* that should follow it. As a result, over half of all marriages

fail, ending in divorce, often with former partners becoming *mortal enemies*! Other couples are just as unhappy, but perhaps cannot afford a divorce, or stay together only because of the children or other social or business reasons.

How tragic! And how completely unnecessary!

Programmed to Fail

Why have so few been able to find even a measure of the enjoyment they originally believed marriage would bring? Why have so many others decided to simply live together, avoiding commitment, thus artificially reducing the already skyrocketing number of divorces? Why do so many openly admit that they do not trust their mate? Why do over 80 percent of marriages experience adultery? Why such rampant confusion about marriage and its purpose?

What has brought the once sacred institution of marriage to such a deplorable state of affairs?

This is no accident. The fact that marriage has been the subject of endless jokes is only the beginning of the story.

Consider how marriage is routinely portrayed in the media. Reflect on the many television programs that countless millions of people have been watching for decades. Gone are *Ozzie and Harriet* (the Nelsons), *Leave it to Beaver* (the Cleavers), *The Waltons*, *Little House on the Prairie* and similar more wholesome pictures of families from the 50s, 60s and early 70s. In

their place came *All in the Family* (Archie Bunker), *Roseanne*, *The Simpsons*, *The Osbournes*, *Friends*, *Will and Grace*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Married With Children*, *That 70s Show* and others too numerous to mention.

Books and movies have also extended and worsened this decline in every way. Fornication, cohabitation without marriage, adultery, homosexuality and every other conceivable “alternative lifestyle,” now including same-sex “marriage,” have been depicted thousands and thousands of times in the media. Invariably, such programs, movies and books have described rampant immorality as exciting, fascinating, mysterious—and the virtual “norm” for what is now the great majority.

Their impact on marriage has been stunning. Marriage has become a laughingstock. Wholesome images of marriages, families and role models of the past have almost disappeared. Sadly, many millions have copied the new, modern role models, discarding traditional marriages and families as obsolete relics that history has properly scrapped.

Recent generations have been conditioned to believe marriage is better “the second time around.” By this logic, the third marriage would be even better!

Accompanying these trends has been a corresponding decline in traditional values and the importance of character—all over the world. Under constant attack, standards of right and wrong—good and bad—old-fashioned “righteousness” and “unrighteousness”—have been blurring and crumbling. How many people any longer even speak of character, once called virtue?

With the steep decline in basic character has come an unwillingness to remain committed to vows exchanged on the wedding day. With the near disappearance of ethics, standards, fundamental reality and basic knowledge of right and wrong, has come the assumption

that when marriage difficulties arise, as they inevitably do with imperfect human beings, couples should simply take the easy way out—divorce!

The Author of Marriage

Why do so few understand that there are great principles—SPIRITUAL LAWS!—governing what most think is merely a civil agreement? How many recognize that men and women have separate, different, God-ordained ROLES that must be understood for marriage to succeed? How many couples have been taught the real PURPOSE of marriage? Most no longer even know the ORIGIN of marriage, let alone the vital answers to these and other important related questions!

The answers to these questions are *revealed* knowledge—knowledge that men cannot themselves discern. God must REVEAL it.

In place of revealed truth, modern education has taught the great evolutionary lie—that life is continually evolving to a higher state. Scoffers, preferring to believe that human beings are a product of blind, dumb luck, dismiss the biblical account that God supernaturally created two literal people, Adam and Eve, and then identified them as history’s first married couple.

Of course, those who believe the unproven *fiction* of evolution must also believe that, at some point, *men* devised the marriage institution. Believing otherwise is incompatible with evolution. One cannot have it both ways. Either God created marriage or men did.

But human beings did *not* create marriage! Therefore, apart from God, they cannot know its true purpose—or the KEYS to decades of happiness with the *same* person. It is not our purpose here to prove that God exists or that the Bible is His inspired Word. We have numerous booklets that address these subjects. Therefore, we start with the fact that the Almighty God, who made the

heavens and the earth, also designed and created marriage.

Though marriage appears to be merely a physical union, starting with a wedding ceremony performed by a man, it is actually a DIVINE INSTITUTION, created by *God*. As the true Author of marriage, God understands what makes it succeed, bringing supreme happiness and joy—or fail, ending in divorce and broken lives. This same God clearly reveals this knowledge in His Word.

For every effect, there is a cause. When a marriage experiences all the *right effects*, yielding happiness, it is because RIGHT CAUSES have been understood and practiced. When a marriage is filled with problems of every sort, causing great unhappiness, *right* causes have been either unknown or ignored.

The Creator God designed marriage to be a source of great happiness, something every couple yearns for. *You* can have an exciting, happy, successful marriage, but only if you follow God’s prescribed formula—the CAUSES—for producing a happy marriage.

God’s Instructions From the Beginning

The first biblical reference to marriage is in Genesis 2. It describes Adam and Eve being brought together by God, forming the first marital union of a man and a woman in history. The account begins in verse 18.

Notice: “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet [Hebrew: “fit or suitable”] for him.”

God explains that men and women were not *designed* to be alone. People never work as well—are not as productive—when they are alone. Men were created—designed—to need an assistant, a help, another person to stand beside them. Of course, the woman is also aided by the man in a variety of ways.

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THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: Paula Rondeau

A Family Reunion?

After centuries of separation, some in each of the major branches of traditional Christianity—Protestantism, Orthodoxy and Catholicism—are finding that they must cross denominational lines to find common ground. What will be the ultimate outcome of this trend?

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

TRADITIONAL Christian churches are perceived as institutions that promote unity and inclusiveness. Paradoxically, division and fragmentation have plagued these churches for centuries.

The first major split in “Christendom” was the Great Schism of 1054, in which the Eastern Orthodox Church broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. This was followed in the sixteenth century by the Protestant Reformation, which further eroded the Catholic sheepfold. Since then, the Protestant world has continued to splinter and divide, with the Roman and Eastern churches remaining separate, but reaching states of relative stability.

Today, Christian denominations are divided internally along many of the same “red-blue/conservative-liberal” ideological lines found in the political arena.

A range of opinion on certain controversial moral and social issues exists among members of each major division of traditional Christianity—but the spectrum of varying beliefs is especially broad among Protestants. These topics include abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty (sometimes referred to as “sanctity of life” issues), homosexuality (including homosexual marriage and openly “gay” clergy), and the ordination of women. Mainline (moderate) and liberal Protestants usually take a permissive stance on these issues, while evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal Protestants hold more conservative views.

To confuse the matter further, many historically liberal denominations now have conservative caucuses growing within their ranks, and doctrines are being liberalized by the leaders of certain “old guard” traditionalist groups.

In this climate, members of the many “fellowships” can no longer expect to find a consensus of belief within their local congregation—or even among the clergy and top officials of their corporate church. Many professing Christians feel compelled to find others of like mind and are being forced to look beyond denominational boundaries to do so.

Ecumenical Development

The term “ecumenical” derives from the Greek word *oikoumene*, meaning “the inhabited world.” The current ecumenical movement consists of organizations, initiatives, programs and forums that promote unity among the various “Christian” factions. The movement first gained widespread attention in 1910 with the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, an all-Protestant gathering. This led to the formation of other groups, which soon began to include Eastern Orthodox adherents.

Alongside the long-established World Council of Churches (WCC), a number of ecumenical organizations have arisen in recent years: The Association for Church Renewal (ACR); the Foundation for a Conference on Faith and Order in North America (FCFONA); Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT); Global Christian Forum (GCF); the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), and others.

While this movement is not new, two recent developments are noteworthy: increased inclusion among these groups of Roman Catholic representatives alongside Protestant and Orthodox officials, and an increased acceptance of Catholic doctrine among Protestants. This is striking, as it was dissent with Catholic doctrine that ignited the Protestant Reformation. In spite of a history of disagreement that often led to persecution, martyrdom and war, these differences are now being minimized.

Ecumenism and Roman Catholicism

How is ecumenism viewed by the Roman Catholic Church, which, at over 1.2 billion members, is the largest professing Christian church?

The Catholic Church began to address this question in its Second Vatican Council, also called Vatican II. The ecumenical council was comprised of four sessions, spanning 1962 to 1965. In these meetings, Catholic leaders encouraged contact with Protestants, and slightly softened their exclusivist language and their opposition to “freedom of conscience” in matters of religion.

Regarding divided Christendom, the Council’s decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, states the following: “...many Christian communions...profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways...Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature.”

It goes on to assert that, “more than ever before, [Christ] has been

rousing divided Christians to remorse over their divisions and to a longing for unity.”

The Legacy of John Paul II

During his pontificate, Pope John Paul II built bridges with many denominations, and even other religions, winning an unprecedented degree of admiration and goodwill among non-Catholics.

The leading Protestant evangelist Billy Graham, despite his fame as “America’s Pastor” and a high-profile career beginning in the mid-1950s, had never met with a pope until 1981. His visit with John Paul II at Rome ended with the pontiff clutching Mr. Graham’s thumb and telling him, “We are brothers.” Mr. Graham did not publicly share this story until 1990, in a *Time* magazine interview. In this nine-year span, relations between the two leaders’ flocks had apparently warmed to the degree that this sentiment was palatable to each group.

John Paul’s 1995 papal letter on ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint* (“That They May be One”), concluded, “As the Church turns her gaze to the new millennium, she asks the Spirit for the grace to strengthen her own unity and to make it grow towards full communion with other Christians.”

Aside from interdenominational outreach, John Paul II’s efforts in helping to defeat communism also endeared him to many non-Catholics.

Continuing the Theme

John Paul II’s successor, Benedict XVI, plans to follow a similar pattern, plainly stating that his “primary task is the duty to work tirelessly to rebuild the full and visible unity of all of Christ’s followers” (*Zenit News Agency*).

A close associate of the new pope expressed that “[Benedict XVI] has written extensively on the subject of ecumenism. As a German, he has had extensive experience with the traditions coming out of the 16th-century divisions, especially Lutheranism and Reformed, or Calvinist, Christianity. He has a sympathetic appreciation

of what Martin Luther got right, and an incisive but non-polemical analysis of what he got wrong, and why. As head of CDF [the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, formerly known as the Holy Office of the Inquisition], he was responsible for the doctrinal aspects of all the ecumenical dialogues in which the Church is engaged...CDF was, for instance, intensely involved in the 1999 Lutheran-Catholic declaration on justification" (ibid.).

As Benedict takes the helm, what is the status of relations between Rome and other denominations?

Catholics and Eastern Orthodox

The Eastern Orthodox Church resembles the Roman Church in doctrine, tradition, liturgy and structure more than any other group. Vatican II states, "These Churches, although separated from us, yet possess true sacraments and above all, by apostolic succession, the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are linked to us in closest intimacy" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*).

The Orthodox Church split from Rome in 1054, but, like the Catholic Church, claims an unbroken line of apostolic succession stretching back to Peter. The mutual excommunications that accompanied the Great Schism nearly 1,000 years ago were mutually rescinded in 1965.

John Paul II's efforts to reach out to the Orthodox are well-known, and the results are summarized by the following statement, published after a June 1995 meeting with the Orthodox leader: "...our Churches declare their desire to relegate the excommunications of the past to oblivion and to set out on the way to re-establishing full communion...Our new-found brotherhood in the name of the one Lord has led us to frank discussion, a dialogue that seeks understanding and unity...A common sacramental conception of the Church has emerged, sustained and passed on in time by the apostolic succession...the Joint Commission has been able to declare that our Churches recognize one

another as Sister Churches, responsible together for safeguarding the one Church of God, in fidelity to the divine plan, and in an altogether special way with regard to unity" (*Common Declaration Signed in the Vatican by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew I*, June 29, 1995).

In a telling public gesture, John Paul's funeral was the first papal funeral in centuries to be attended by the Patriarch of Constantinople, the leader of the Eastern Orthodox.

Catholics and Evangelicals

A number of Protestant denominations known as evangelical emphasize evangelism (preaching to witness and proselytize), doctrinal conservatism, professed adherence to Scripture, a "born-again" conversion experience, and promoting family-oriented cultural values, often through politics. In general, evangelicals are seen as the right wing of the Protestant world.

Evangelicals and Catholics comprise more than half of all churchgoers in the United States. It seems there is now more common ground between these two groups than between evangelicals and liberal Protestants. The common enemy that has helped unite these factions is *secularism*. Evangelicals, despite a historic animosity toward Catholicism and the papacy, appear to believe that any form of traditional Christianity is preferable to the hedonism, materialism and moral relativism overtaking the West.

The incentive for Protestants is strength in numbers. They see that in order to "fix" the culture around them, it is expedient to join those who share their most pressing concerns. Religious activist Gary Bauer put this new phenomenon in context: "When John F. Kennedy made his famous speech that the Vatican would not tell him what to do, evangelicals and Southern Baptists breathed a sigh of relief. But today evangelicals and Southern Baptists are hoping that the Vatican will tell Catholic politicians what to do" (*USAToday*).

Rome has traditionally avoided full official involvement in ecumenical groups. They did not establish relations with the WCC, founded in 1948, until 1965, after Vatican II. At that point, they still declined membership, choosing rather to form a Joint Working Group as a means of contact at arm's length.

However, in November 2004, U.S. Catholic bishops meeting in Washington voted to join the CCT, marking "the first time in American history that you have Catholic bishops joining an ecumenical organization with Protestants and Orthodox" (*Christianity Today*).

An evangelical minister commented, "I believe one of the reasons Catholics were comfortable joining this was because of the presence of evangelicals. The same was true of the Orthodox" (ibid.).

Along with interfaith dialogue, marriage and the sanctity of life will be prominent in Benedict's papacy. Both themes are very important to evangelicals.

While many mainstream Protestant denominations change with the times, Catholic stability creates a clear contrast that will serve Rome's purpose well.

Catholics and the Church of England

The Church of England, also called the Anglican Communion, encompasses the Episcopal Church in the United States, and claims 77 million adherents. This denomination was established in 1536 by King Henry VIII. Similar to the Orthodox, the Anglicans have held on to much Catholic form and ceremony: "Among those [groups springing from the Reformation] in which Catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*).

Referring to the mother of Jesus Christ, Pope John Paul II called England "Mary's dowry" in an address at London's Wembley Stadium in 1982, to the enthusiastic cheers of the crowd. In retrospect, this seemed to foreshadow a recent cooperative

step. On May 16, 2005, the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) released a document titled “Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ.” It concludes that Anglican doctrine is compatible with Catholic dogma on the Immaculate Conception, which declares that Mary was born unstained by “original sin,” and the Assumption of Mary, the belief that Mary ascended bodily to heaven.

Scripture does not teach either of these doctrines, and the Anglican Church had historically rejected them. However, in a press conference to mark the event, the Anglican Abbey Canon Nicholas Sagovsky stated, “As Anglicans and Roman Catholics, we believe that through our baptism into Christ we already share a deep unity and we look forward in prayer and hope to the day when we shall no longer be separated at the Eucharist” (*AnglicanCommunion.org*). This document will be reviewed by Vatican and Anglican officials.

The Role of Mary

The Church of England is not alone in its reassessment of Mary’s place in modern Christianity. Many Protestants are inching toward a more Catholic view of this New Testament figure.

In some cases, an increased focus on Mary in American Protestant churches is a result of, or a response to, an influx of Hispanics into the pews, most of whom have a Catholic family heritage. A recent *Time* magazine cover story on the subject includes the following account: “A man stands at the lectern at the El Amor de Dios Church on Chicago’s South Side reading in Spanish, tears streaming down his cheeks. His text is a treatment of the Virgin Mary from one of the Bible’s apocryphal books. Another congregant follows, reciting his own verses to the Virgin...Flanking the altar are two Mary statues...hanging from the hands of the baby Jesus is a Rosary. The altar cover presents the church’s most stunning image: Mary again, this time totally surrounded by a multi-colored halo, in

the traditional iconography of the Our Lady of Guadalupe. The church is Methodist.”

One hundred years ago, this scene would have shocked the typical Methodist, as the avoidance of “Mariolatry” in part distinguished the Protestant world from Catholicism. Increasingly, this distinction is being blurred.

Also, certain theologians have appealed to feminist sensibilities, which encourage conjecture about women in the Bible. They use this approach to introduce themes such as Mary as Christ’s first disciple, as an “activist” who bucks the patriarchal culture of her time, and even as a prophetess. One Protestant author, reflecting on the Mexican Catholic interpretation of Mary as “Our Lady of Guadalupe,” concludes that future study of Mary should “come from a feminist liberative perspective that promotes freedom and espouses a holistic life for Mexican and Mexican-American women” (*Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary*, Gaventa and Rigby, eds.).

Interestingly, the Protestant Mary has been reconfigured to appeal to women and Hispanics—both seen as key voting blocs in the current “red-blue” cultural battle.

Meanwhile, in the Catholic fold, millions of lay members and hundreds of clergy have signed a petition to declare Mary the co-redemptrix (meaning that she cooperates with Jesus in redeeming humanity).

Of course, this idea is utterly unscriptural.

“Heretics” Versus “Separated Brethren”

To be considered a traditional Christian church, a denomination must affirm belief in the trinity and accept the divinity of Christ. These two elements also seem to form the minimum criteria for membership in some ecumenist organizations.

The Catholic Church stresses the importance of other elements: The receiving of communion (Eucharist) and baptism. “Furthermore, the

Sacrament of Baptism, which we have in common, represents ‘a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been reborn by means of it’...Although this sacrament of itself is ‘only a beginning, a point of departure’, it is ‘oriented towards a complete profession of faith, a complete incorporation into the system of salvation such as Christ himself willed it to be, and finally, towards a complete participation in Eucharistic communion’” (*Ut Unum Sint*).

If a church possesses these characteristics, Catholics consider them “separated brethren”—a middle ground between true believers and heretics. Orthodox Christians categorize Catholics and Protestants as heterodox (“other believing”) rather than heretic (“other choosing”).

Persuasion, Conversion and Annexation

There is a sharp contrast between the Catholic and Orthodox viewpoint, and that of the typical Protestant, in entering ecumenical dialogue. Protestants focus on finding common ground, on compromise between doctrinal positions, finding the lowest common denominators in order to work together, and sharing with the Catholics or Orthodox “new elements” of Christianity from the Reformation heritage.

However, the Catholic and Orthodox concepts of ecumenism have one goal in mind: Persuasion of separated brethren to traditional teaching and correction of Reformation-era error—in other words, conversion.

If Vatican II slightly softened the tone of Catholic pronouncements toward those outside the fold, its conclusions were still uncompromising:

“This Sacred Council exhorts the faithful...[that] their ecumenical action must be fully and sincerely Catholic...faithful to the truth which we have received from the apostles and Fathers of the Church, in harmony with the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed” (*Unitatis Redintegratio*).

“This is the one Church of Christ...

professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour, after His Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd, and him and the other apostles to extend and direct with authority, which He erected for all ages as ‘the pillar and mainstay of the truth’. This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity” (*Lumen Gentium*).

Conciliatory rhetoric notwithstanding, Rome is not interested in conceding doctrinal ground, or backing away from its claim to be the only true Church, and therefore the *only* path to salvation. They desire unity of all believers, but not at the expense of established doctrine or papal authority. While Protestant denominations allow latitude for disagreement, Rome never loses sight of its goal of complete conformity. The official Catholic position is that one cannot openly contradict Catholic teaching and remain a member in good standing.

Overall, the drift of modern ecumenism is toward Rome, reversing the objectives of the Reformation. There is less focus on merging Protestant organizations, and more focus on Protestant churches doctrinally gravitating toward Catholicism.

Even in the midst of outreach efforts, Catholic doctrine is not changing. For example, John Paul II had increasingly stressed the importance of indulgences (pardon from punishment for future sins in return for payment or “pious” actions), and Benedict has authorized “plenary indulgences” to any who participate in World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany. This is significant, since this practice was one that outraged Martin Luther and helped spark the Reformation. For some years after

Vatican II, indulgences were downplayed.

Ironically, the Greek word *oikoumene*, mentioned earlier, was often used to refer to the Roman Empire. This is what the Vatican has in mind—all ecumenical roads leading to Rome!

Hurdles Preventing Unity

The Eastern Orthodox and the various Protestant denominations have certain doctrines or practices that currently prevent full unity with the Vatican.

Protestants generally reject Catholic use of religious icons such as statues, the veneration of “saints,” and the Catholic position that church tradition overrides Scripture. There are certain specific doctrines that vary, such as the Lutherans’ “consubstantiation” contrasting with Catholic “transubstantiation.”

In the case of the Orthodox, the main obstacle is their acceptance of the Patriarch of Constantinople as the human leader of the Church rather than the bishop of Rome, as well as the doctrine of papal infallibility.

The Church of England capitulating to Rome would involve a compromise of national sovereignty, as the Anglican leader, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is nominated by Britain’s queen. In addition, Anglican female priests began to be ordained in 1994, which contradicts Catholic teaching.

There is also alarm on the part of some Protestant leaders. For example, a Southern Baptist theologian characterized the recent increased focus on Mary as “the Reformation in reverse” (*Time* magazine). Others point to a document written in September 2000 by then-Cardinal Ratzinger. *Dominus Iesus* provoked anger with its references to the “defects” of Protestant churches and its insistence that salvation is available only through the Roman Church. Some viewed this work as negating the more inclusive tone of Vatican II.

Catalyst for Full Unification

The process of integration, while steadily gaining momentum, is still a

cumbersome, inefficient process, hindered by the layers of bureaucracy in each of the churches involved.

Although Benedict is very interested in the full and visible unity of all professing Christians, he has limited expectations for mere human efforts to accomplish this: “[Benedict] has also emphasized that the way toward unity is not a matter of our programs and schedules but of faithful waiting upon a new initiative of the Holy Spirit which we can neither control nor anticipate” (*Zenit News Agency*).

Indeed, to expedite the ecumenical process, a catalyst far beyond rhetoric, diplomacy and dialogue is needed.

History shows, and human nature dictates, that decisive action taken by large numbers is typically sparked by crisis, and facilitated by a strong central figure—a leader who can offer the masses what they long for, whether it is prosperity and prestige, freedom from oppression, deliverance from suffering or a bolstering of collective pride and resolve.

Two Churches in the End-time

An address published in 1950 states, “The Catholic Church...embraces with truly maternal affection all who return to her as the true Church of Christ” (“On the ‘Ecumenical Movement’ – An Instruction of the Holy Office”).

In Revelation 17, the apostle John describes a religious system pictured as a mother with daughters. This “woman” is called a harlot (vs. 5), in contrast to the true Church, which is symbolized as a virtuous woman in chapter 12. (Please read the article “What Did the New Testament Church Look Like?”, featured in this issue.)

This system is prophesied to grow very powerful one more time, but for a short time, only to have her reign end violently just prior to Christ’s Return.

We can expect the current drift toward the Catholic Church to continue and intensify in the years ahead, resulting in a final “family reunion” for professing Christianity! (To learn more, read our publication *Many shall come IN MY NAME.*) □

What Did the New Testament Church Look Like?

Professing Christianity is comprised of many groups and endless schools of thought. But does the picture today reflect the New Testament Church of 2,000 years ago? The comparisons will surprise you!

BY KEVIN D. DENEÉ

TWO BILLION people on earth profess to be Christian. In other words, nearly every third person believes he is following Jesus Christ and the Bible.

Dominant in Western nations, Christianity is the world's most popular religion, appearing in all sorts of shapes, sizes, varieties and flavors.

Huston Smith, author of *The World's Religions*, described the world of Christianity this way: "From the majestic pontifical High Mass in St. Peter's to the quiet simplicity of a Quaker meeting; from the intellectual sophistication of Saint Thomas Aquinas to the moving simplicity of spirituals such as 'Lord, I want to be a Christian,' from St. Paul's in London, the parish Church of Great Britain, to Mother Teresa in the slums of Calcutta—all this is Christianity."

Was he correct? Is this the picture of *true* Christianity?

The Traditional Churches

Have you ever wondered why there are so many different groups? Have you ever thought to yourself: "Is this what Christ meant when He said, 'I

will build my Church?'" Additionally, have you asked, "What is the difference between these groups?"—"Which one is the exact continuation of the first-century Church?"

If you are religious, then your beliefs are important to you—religion is a central part of your life.

However, have you ever examined the traditional view of Christianity? Have you compared it with your Bible? Or do you simply assume that the church you attend is correct?

If religion is an important part of your life, then you should not take the answers to these questions lightly. On the other hand, if you do not consider yourself religious, this article will change your perspective of those who call themselves Christian.

What Did the Church Look Like?

Suppose you are living during the first century, and you are asked what you think Christianity will look like in 2,000 years. The only item you have to determine your answer is the Bible. What picture would you paint? Would it look similar to what exists today? Since the Holy Bible is Christianity's foundation, it must hold the answers to the religion that comes from it.

Why, therefore, are there so many groups today claiming to be Christian? The simplest answer is that they all teach different things. If they taught the same doctrines, they would be united under one Church government—in one group.

The book of Acts begins with the birth of the New Testament Church. Therefore, this would be the place to begin. Notice how the Church was described after 3,000 people were baptized in one day: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' *doctrine* and *fellowship*" (Acts 2:42).

Why is this significant? The two most defining features of God's Church are evident: steadfast continuation in (1) the apostles' doctrine (teachings), and (2) fellowship. Then, after verse 43 explains that the fear of God was apparent in "every soul," verse 44 adds, "...all that believed were together." Verse 46 also states that they continued to be of "one accord [agreement]," meeting together "daily" in various houses in "singleness of heart."

The Church of God was unified!—not divided in varying and disagreeing groups all calling themselves Christian.

One Church or Many?

Professing Christianity believes that God's Church is split into different branches. Perhaps the Methodists best explain the common position of Christianity: "Nourished by common roots of this *shared Christian heritage*, the branches of Christ's church have developed *diverse traditions* that

enlarge our store of *shared understandings*. Our avowed *ecumenical commitment* as United Methodists is to gather our *own doctrinal emphases* into the *larger Christian unity*, there to be made more meaningful in a *richer whole*" (emphasis ours).

While this sounds honorable, is it what Christ intended? Were there to be many groups of "diverse traditions" all with their own "doctrinal emphasis"?

Even the Roman Catholics, who, for the most part, believe that God's Church cannot be divided, say this: "Those [outside the Roman Catholic Church] who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church" (Catech 838).

Again, are all these differing groups what Jesus Christ intended?

The Bible is clear that the Church—Christ's Body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18)—is unified. Notice:

■ **I Corinthians 1:10:** "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you *all speak the same thing*, and that there be *no divisions* among you; but that you be *perfectly joined together* in the *same mind* and in the *same judgment*."

■ **I Corinthians 12:25:** "...there should be *no schism* in the body."

■ **Ephesians 4:16:** "From whom the whole body *fitly joined together* [Moffat translation: "*welded together*"] and *compacted* by that which every joint supplies."

Do these scriptures describe modern Christianity? The answer is clear!

The world is filled with all sorts of different groups professing to be Christian, and most profess that the other competing groups are also Christian. Yet, notice Christ's words: "And if a house be divided against

itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25). The Greek word for "stand" can also mean "abide, continue, be established, hold up." A house or any organization cannot stand—abide, continue, hold up—if divided. Yet, the world of Christianity *is* divided!

Would Christ have built His Church to contradict His statement in Mark 3:25? Of course not.

Simply put, Christ said, "I will build My Church" (Matt. 16:18)—not churches! This is the first of *many* differences that you will discover as this article continues. (Please read the article "The Ecumenical Movement – A Family Reunion?", in this issue.)

Is God a Trinity?

When researching the statements of belief of various Christian denominations, invariably, the description of God is listed first. Of course, since Christianity should be based on following the God of the Bible, it is understandable that God is central.

Notice the common view of mainstream Christians: "The most distinguishing belief of Christianity is the doctrine of the Trinity, which views the one God as consisting of three Persons: the Father, the Son (Christ) and the Holy Spirit" (*religionfacts.com*).

Yet, nowhere in the entire Bible is the trinity mentioned, even if one combines a number of verses to try to prove it! (One scripture does mention this triune relationship in the King James translation, but biblical scholars admit that this verse was not part of the original text.) The convoluted, confused picture of God that professing Christianity presents is simply not there.

Of course, the true nature of God cannot be explained in a few short statements. Nevertheless, God's Word

is clear on *who* and *what* God is. There are only two God-beings—the Father and Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is not a person. (Read our book *The TRINITY – Is God three-in-one?* to understand the nature of God.)

The True Gospel

Another common emphasis among modern Christian churches is the mission of spreading and teaching the gospel. But how do all these groups *define* Christ's gospel?

The word "gospel" means "good news." Christ was a Messenger who preached a message of good news. Yet, almost every church believes and teaches that the gospel message is about Jesus Christ Himself—in effect, the message is about the Messenger. They focus on teaching and spreading stories about His life to new believers.

Christ *does* play an extremely important and central role in Christianity; however, *He* is not the gospel. Though the Bible clearly shows that Jesus should be preached in conjunction with the gospel, it also clearly shows that He Himself *preached* the gospel—and He did not talk about Himself when He did so!

The Methodists believe the following: "Gospel has a number of distinct meanings. It refers to the Good News concerning Christ, the Kingdom of God, and salvation. It also refers to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles."

As can be seen from this definition, Christianity takes a vague approach to this basic, most fundamental teaching—the actual mission of Christianity is watered down, confused and simply taught incorrectly.

How does the Bible define the gospel? Notice Mark 1:14: "...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching *the gospel of the kingdom of God*." This is the gospel that Jesus preached. It was in this



same context that He said, “Repent you, and believe the gospel.” Which gospel? “...of the kingdom of God.” (Read our booklet *Which is the REAL GOSPEL?* to learn more.)

Holidays and Holy Days

Central to modern Christianity is its many holidays: “The most important Christian holiday is Easter, a spring holiday that celebrates Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Easter is immediately preceded by Holy Week, which includes Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. The 40 days prior to Easter form the Lenten season, a time of fasting and repentance. Another holiday that came to be important is Christmas, which commemorates the birth of Jesus on December 25. Saints’ days are also important. Some of these, such as St. Patrick’s Day and St. Valentine’s Day, have come to play a prominent role in popular American culture” (*religionfacts.com*).

These are commonly observed days for both the religious and non-religious—but they are not taught in the Bible! Neither will you find that New Testament Christians kept these worldly holidays. (Only once does the word “Easter” appear in the Bible. However, upon closer examination, the Greek word actually should be translated “Passover.”)

So then, we must ask: What days, if any, *did* the New Testament Church observe?

The Old Testament describes the Holy Days instituted by God millennia ago. Physical Israel kept those days as did spiritual Israel—the New Testament Church.

Notice that Paul mentioned the Days of Unleavened Bread: “And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days” (Acts 20:6).

Also, in Acts 2, we find the Church keeping the Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost). Because it was a Holy Day, the Church was “all with one accord in one place.”

Then there are the other Holy Days established by God—Passover,

the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

These Holy Days picture God’s Plan for mankind. (Our booklet *God’s HOLY DAYS or Pagan HOLIDAYS?* explains the full meaning of these days.)

The Seventh-Day Sabbath

Another common trait of traditional Christianity is Sunday worship: “Christian practices vary by denomination, but common elements include a Sunday worship service...” (*religionfacts.com*). The vast majority of professing Christians claim that Sunday is the “Lord’s Day,” and that those who believe in God are to keep this day.

Many also believe that Christ did away with the seventh-day Sabbath. Then why did Christ say to His disciples, “Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28)?

Notice this astonishing admission on whether Christ authorized the change from the Sabbath to Sunday: “For example, nowhere in the Bible do we find that Christ or the Apostles ordered that the Sabbath be changed from Saturday to Sunday. We have the commandment of God given to Moses to keep holy the Sabbath day that is the 7th day of the week, Saturday. Today most Christians keep Sunday because it has been revealed to us by the [Roman Catholic] church outside the Bible” (*Catholic Virginian*).

The Bible commands God’s people to have a “holy convocation” (or assembly) on the Sabbath and Holy Days (Lev. 23:3). Our book *The SABBATH or Sunday – which?* explains that Jesus Christ kept the Sabbath, first-century Christians kept that day, and God’s people are still required to observe the seventh day.

By keeping Sunday instead of God’s Sabbath, modern Christianity differs from what the Bible teaches and from what New Testament Christians 2,000 years ago observed.

A Little Flock

Could so many of these large, well-established churches—with hundreds

of millions of people—be wrong?

Society, especially in Western cultures, stresses, “Bigger is better.” More money, more friends, larger cars, bigger houses and so on are all seen as a better way of life. The more people one can find to support this or that group, idea, or cause, the better. This way of thinking is prevalent in professing Christianity. People feel safe in numbers; therefore, large congregations are more popular, and thus grow faster than small ones.

But just because the majority follows a certain way, does that make it right?

Christ calls His Church a *little* flock (Luke 12:32). Only when Christ returns will God’s way of life prevail throughout the world. Until that point, Christ is only working with a few—called “firstfruits”—to rule with Him after His Second Coming.

“The god of this world”

Although we have looked at a few of the major differences between today’s Christianity and the Church that Christ established, let’s also look at how Jesus described counterfeit Christianity: “Howbeit in vain do [they] worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, [they] hold the tradition of men. Full well [they] reject the commandment of God, that [they] may keep [their] own tradition” (Mark 7:7-9).

This article has briefly touched upon several common beliefs to which the majority of so-called Christians adhere.

So what happened within the last 2,000 years? How could so many today be so deceived?—and so wrong?

The Bible reveals that the whole world is deceived (Rev. 12:9) by the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4)—Satan the devil. The world is cut off from God, and Satan has deceived a large part of it into thinking they are following Christ. But, they are following “another Jesus” (11:4)—and, in fact, are not part of true Christianity.

Will you put forth the effort to find the *true* Church? □



TRUE JUSTICE

An Impossible Goal?

Legal systems worldwide, riddled with loopholes and corruption, produce a great deal of injustice. These institutions *should* maintain order and deliver justice. What has gone wrong? Is there a solution?

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

MANKIND has put its hope for evenhanded justice into various courts and legal systems. The institutions in each country have different methods, laws and penalties. Are any of these superior to the rest?

In America, the flash of cameras surrounding high-profile cases is commonplace. Defendants range from movie stars to serial killers, with every news organization, media outlet and newspaper chain searching for the latest facts, suppositions and rumors. Even cases involving

brutal, violent crimes are reduced to a daily soap opera. Throughout such ordeals, one often hears the media speaking of “seeking justice.” But is justice ever found?

Then there are the cases that may not garner instant media attention, such as certain perceived social injustices or judges “legislating from the bench.” Other cases might involve dramatically divergent sentences for the same crime. Again, justice is sought, but double standards are found.

Oftentimes, the rich are able to afford good counsel—and get an acquittal—while the poor do not

receive the same quality of representation. Is this just?

What about clear open-and-shut cases involving those who commit horrible crimes? For example, a case may be one in which a serial killer is caught red-handed. There is no doubt of his guilt, and he may even receive the death penalty. Do these sentences actually deter others from committing similar crimes? If so, why do such crimes happen so often?

In these examples, much attention is given to the legal process, the people involved and the commotion that has become the norm in Western courts. Does the media circus, activist judges and decades of appeals establish fair, evenhanded justice? They do not—they only leave more unanswered questions.

Recently, the American media has focused on a missing person’s case in Aruba. They have been quick to point out perceived problems in the island nation’s Dutch legal system,

and explain how it differs from the U.S. Do certain countries have more advanced—more effective—judicial systems?

And then there is the Middle East. Many of these countries institute punishments such as severing hands for theft or stoning women for adultery. Are *these* systems more effective?

People, cities and countries across the world seek to establish justice, but do any actually *apply* it? Are any of these systems more fair—more just?

Some opine that the American system is the most advanced, yet corruption abounds at every level. Looking into the CAUSE of the problems in the court systems around the world, one is left without SOLUTIONS.

Yet, there *is* a solution that the vast majority overlooks.

Crime Today

Even the briefest look at the crime wave sweeping the world gives insight into the effects of modern laws and justice.

For instance, youth crime is spiraling out of control. The daily news often reports about children's involvement in elaborate and complex crimes. Notice: "An uncontrollable teenage girl wrecked an entire street of 30 houses as she led a gang of young thugs on a systematic orgy of vandalism.

"[The] sixteen-year-old...who is said to run her mob like a mafia boss, caused more than £600,000 [nearly one million U.S. dollars] damage over a few weeks...

"The destruction of Dixon Road was the culmination of a three-year reign of terror by [the teen]...who has been responsible for arson, assault, damage to property, threatening behaviour, throwing missiles at police officers, harassing an RSPCA inspector and throwing stones at buildings and firefighters.

"Neighbours said her single mother had given up trying to control her.

"She refused to attend school, reveled in her notoriety as a 'hard case' and boasted: 'I've done all kinds of things, aimed fireworks at the police,

smashed up police cars and stolen things'... 'People were absolutely petrified. She ruled [the neighborhood] like a mafia boss, handing out punishment to all those who crossed her. Fires were started and when police were called she threw bricks at them. It has been an absolute nightmare'... 'She and her gang have wrecked the lives of many pensioners who have been simply too scared to step foot outside their homes'...

"Last night neighbours said [the girl], her mother and three or four other children had left the area in the last few days and were thought to be in Leeds. Everyone prayed they would not be back" ("The girl thug aged 16 who destroyed an entire street," *Daily Mail*, July 6, 2002).

Even though this is just one case, in one city, in one country, this evidences a growing problem of youth violence around the world.

Murder has also reached astronomical levels. With very little respite, the number of murders worldwide increases each year. The growth of violent and serial murders is the most shocking. School shootings, "going postal" and other violent rampages are signs that criminals are not deterred from committing murder and other violent crimes.

The attempted solution has been to hire additional police officers, who must enforce new and increasingly complicated laws. For instance, New York City has 72,000 officers. Considering that the average yearly salary is \$50,000, law enforcement *alone* costs New York City taxpayers \$3.6 billion! In essence, they have thrown money at the problem, instead of addressing its CAUSE.

Consider the following: According to the *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*, during an average morning, one person dies in an alcohol-related accident, 59 aggravated assaults occur, approximately 90 violent crimes transpire and one murder is committed. This is *just* the United States—and only *one morning!*

This succinct overview should demonstrate that something is wrong—and

that the laws, penalties and court systems are not able to curb the tsunami of crime crushing the world. (To learn much more about the crime problem exploding around the world, read our extensive prophetic conditions report *The Worldwide CRIMEWAVE*.)

Today's Courtrooms

After a perpetrator is caught, he eventually faces charges in a court of law. This process *should* enact justice—but justice is sometimes the farthest thing from the minds of those involved. The original purpose of a court case was to present all evidence pertinent to the crime, including physical evidence, witness statements, criminal history, etc., so that a fair verdict could be rendered by either judge or jury. The objective was not to wrongly convict an innocent party, or to acquit one who is guilty. The law is intended to be fairly applied, so that all parties receive justice.

However, this is not the picture today. Exorbitant amounts of money are spent on the "science" of a courtroom. A wide range of studies have been done on the "art" of jury selection, and, a recent movie was made about this process. While sensationalized by Hollywood, it contained interesting elements demonstrating the complexity of jury selection. Millions of dollars can be spent on padding the jury before a trial begins. Certain personality types, races, educational backgrounds and many other factors help either prosecutor or defendant gain the advantage.

And then there are the consultants for the defense. Even in cases in which guilt is obvious, the defendant is coached on how to dress, sit and address the jury, and what facial expression to show—all done to sway the jury to acquit. Legal battles have been fought over whether jurors will rule fairly if the defendant wears an orange jumper or enters the courtroom in shackles. Oftentimes, the outcome is in favor of the perpetrator.

(You might recall a recent case in which a court bailiff was shot because the defendant, who was known to be

violent, was not shackled during proceedings.)

Consider how evidence is handled. Depending on its nature, how it is collected and other factors, certain evidence might not be allowed into the courtroom. Seemingly minuscule technicalities can cause a guilty party to be acquitted because certain evidence is never brought before a jury.

The same can be said of past criminal records. A defendant's lawyer will often fervently argue to have past crimes hidden, under the guise of preventing jury bias. In fact, past crimes lay the groundwork for demonstrating a propensity to become a repeat offender.

In these pre-trial motions, this jockeying back and forth is nearly a court case in itself. These motions ensure that evidence and records—the *facts*—are hidden from an unsuspecting jury.

These motions, along with padded juries and dishonest witnesses and legal counsel, produce circus side-shows regularly depicted on television (often to the tune of huge ratings, as news outlets feed the drama-thirsty Western culture).

Ultimately, only one person is charged to maintain order: the judge!

Choosing Judges

The purpose of judges is to keep the procedures running smoothly. Acting as a court “referee,” he must balance between pursuing the truth and recognizing tricks used by legal counsel. He attempts to keep things fair. However, as we have seen, the courtroom is far from fair, even before the proceedings begin. Nevertheless, this is the duty to which he has been assigned.

This means that a judge has a very difficult task: He must ensure that unfair evidence is not brought forward, and that lawyers—many of whom are becoming better at exploiting legal loopholes—do not mislead the jury. As you can imagine, this assigns a substantial amount of power to judges.

When they are affirmed into their role, they swear to uphold the law, following the Constitution and previous rulings when deciding a matter. It is

thought that the body of existing precedents, measured against established laws, would mean that a greater number of judges decide matters. Judges, however, have increasingly begun to rule based on their *ideology*, not on the Constitution, evidence and existing precedents.

The power to “legislate from the bench,” as it is often called, completely undermines the American system of government. Judges—more so than Congress or the President—have the power to change the cultural fabric of society.

This is why the selection of judges is becoming increasingly political and vicious. Democrats want one who will further their agenda; the same is true of Republicans. Witness the recent retirement of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Her resignation opened the way for a new appointee—and the battles have begun!

Each side feels that they know the solution to society's problems. They feel that if “their man” is put in the Supreme Court seat, many of the ills plaguing America could be corrected. However, judges are not supposed to further *any* agenda. Their job is to interpret the law, based on existing rulings. Since Supreme Court justices are on the bench for life, the man or woman chosen has nearly unchecked power.

Judges are supposed to be the benign overseers of the legal system. However, fighting, bickering, legislating and, in some cases, scandals have caused many to view the whole system with suspicion, distrust and doubt.

The system is broken! One cannot undo years of unjust and unfair rulings. One cannot fix a system in which every aspect, from the judges at the top, to the lawyers at its base, is viewed with mistrust. It does not deter criminals—and rarely delivers justice to victims.

Only America?

Is this a localized problem? Are courts in other countries more effective than the American system? Much media attention has recently been brought

to Dutch law, as applied to Aruba, comparing it to American law. The root of these two systems is utterly different. Dutch law is called “civil” law, which is based on Roman laws. The American legal system (and that of most Western nations) is based on common law—the customs, traditions and history of that nation.

Some major differences between these systems emerge. For example, under Dutch law, jury trials are not used. Everything is brought before a trained judge. There are obvious advantages to this. In the U.S. legal system, much legal “wrangling” goes into selecting and swaying juries. On the other hand, a trained judge should be able to see through the tactics of smooth lawyers.

However, this also means that a corrupt judge would have the only say in a particular case. To protect against this, the prosecution or defense can ask for a retrial. The matter is then sent to a three-judge panel, and the entire process is repeated. Of course, any defendant who is found guilty would request this.

In such a system, justice could never be swift, because either party can—and likely will—ask for a repeat. Unlike the American system, the retrial basically starts from scratch, as if the original court case did not happen. Under American law, the prosecutor cannot retry a person who has been acquitted. This is not the case under Dutch law.

Another interesting difference between the two systems is that, under Dutch law, one cannot negotiate a plea bargain. Those familiar with American law will recognize that defendants sometimes plead guilty in exchange for a lesser sentence. For instance, a murder charge could be reduced to manslaughter—even though murder was actually committed. To the families involved, the injustice is obvious.

When a defendant is charged with murder under the Dutch system, the prosecutor must prove the charge. The drawback is that the entire process

Please see JUSTICE, page 17

Will Another “Wake-up Call” Go Unheeded?

Human nature usually ignores warnings—even the most obvious. How many will recognize this *wake-up call*—or greater ones to come? Then, how many will heed? Read and learn the CAUSE of this disaster, and how everything will change—and soon! While it is always darkest before dawn, hope lies ahead!

AS THE CITY of New Orleans and the coastal regions of Mississippi and Alabama struggle to recover from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, many ask, “Why?”

Why were tens of thousands of homes damaged or destroyed?

Why did so many people—especially the poor, the elderly and the young—suffer power outages, flooded homes, overcrowded temporary shelters, shortages of food and fresh water, looting, injury—and even death? Why were millions left homeless? And why are whole cities in Mississippi listed as “gone”?

As soon as the storm left New Orleans, people defied the curfew and ventured into the French Quarter ready to drink and celebrate. At first, it was thought that the city had been largely spared. But soon the nation learned how wrong they were.

Here is an overview of the devastation: An estimated 25,000 people in

the Superdome, once thought to be a safe haven for those residents and tourists who could not flee the city, had to be evacuated. The entire parish of St. Bernard was wiped out. Two levees broke, allowing Lake Pontchartrain to pour into New Orleans, which is shaped like a saucer bowl 6 to 13 feet below sea level. This resulted in as much as 90 percent of the city being underwater. Officials projected that electricity was several weeks away. Large numbers took advantage of the confusion, looting stores and homes. Highways and roads were shut down. The causeway that stretched across Lake Pontchartrain was broken into giant chunks. Hundreds were estimated dead along the Gulf Coast. Parts of Biloxi, Mississippi, resembled a war zone. Many remaining homes were left without clean drinking water.

Again, Why?

Insurance companies categorize damage caused by nature as “acts of God.” But was *this* God’s doing? If so, does this make God a “cruel monster” who

does not have compassion upon the weak and helpless? Or is He doing today as He did many times to ancient Israel—sending a *warning* before a much more severe *punishment* comes?

As residents and tourists evacuated the city, a giant, hand-painted sign that read, “Please Pray for New Orleans” was left behind.

How would the God of the Bible answer such a prayer—what would be His reaction? Would He ignore that city’s history of lasciviousness, which has generated countless stories of debauchery and lewdness—and for centuries? Does God simply accept people “as they are” and not require a change of heart?

When the twin towers in New York City fell, the nation paused. People stopped to consider their words and actions. They realized how fragile and fleeting their lives were. They became friendlier, more introspective.

But America’s humble mood did not last long. Today, we see a society that is self-centered, self-focused and self-motivated. Servicemen returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have stated that Americans do not realize or appreciate how rich, how *privileged*—how BLESSED!—they are as a nation.

The wanton, decadent misuse of that prosperity is reflected in the city of New Orleans, truly the original “sin city” long before Las Vegas earned this title.

Paganism Breeds Drunken Promiscuity

Tourism is the city's most lucrative market. An estimated 10.1 million visitors came to New Orleans in 2004, with more than 1.4 million visiting for just a day. Total visitor spending amounted to \$4.9 billion that year!

Though many come to experience the food and music for which New Orleans is famous, "The Big Easy" is also known around the world for its drunken permissiveness, where alcohol seems to flow through the streets.

Many bars stay open 24 hours a day, seven days a week; and one can easily find a bar with a "drink special" virtually any night of the workweek. Customers can legally wander the city carrying "to go" cups filled with alcoholic drinks. Drive-thru daiquiri shops are found throughout the metro area. Sightings of inebriated tourists lying face down in the gutters of the French Quarter are commonplace.

While *moderate* alcohol consumption is not wrong, drinking in *excess* IS—and "excess of wine" is tied to "revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries" (I Pet. 4:3).

This is the city that proudly honors Bacchus, the false god of wine and intoxication, during every Mardi Gras. Just as Bacchus' ancient Roman worshippers indulged themselves in late-night drunkenness and lasciviousness, so do his followers today.

Almost any fleshly desire can be satisfied in the French Quarter, especially during Carnival season. Like most worldly holidays, Mardi Gras is firmly rooted in ancient paganism, which always involved gross sexual immorality in the forms of religiously-sanctioned prostitution, homosexuality and even bestiality!

No wonder, then, that millions of tourists flock to New Orleans every year to indulge themselves in every carnal passion. Women stand on French Quarter balconies and freely expose themselves for all to see. Strip clubs are frequented by "clean cut," middle class out-of-towners. Certain bars and dance clubs at the fringe of the Quarter's tourist area offer homo-

sexual rendezvous for visitors seeking anonymous encounters.

In the midst of this truly heathen, licentious environment, spiritism, voodoo and the occult thrive. Some residents freely identify themselves as witches and voodoo priestesses.

"King cake parties" are held every week through the Carnival season; some bring these cakes to work so that everyone can share in this Mardi Gras tradition. Inside each cake is a trinket, often a miniature plastic baby—to symbolize "Jesus"! Whoever finds the "baby Jesus" must bring a new king cake to work the next day.

Would the God of the Bible view this as lighthearted fun? Would He want His only begotten Son to be trivialized as a mere *party favor*?

The Growing Gambling Addiction

Casino gambling exists throughout the metropolitan area and the Gulf Coast. Yet, perhaps the most insidious form of gambling is found in virtually any New Orleans bar, restaurant or even doughnut shops.

Video poker—often referred to as "video crack"—is among the most addictive forms of gambling. Often, players spend hour after hour feeding money into the machines and staring into video poker screens, mesmerized by the instant "rush" that they feel. Some players have wasted their family's entire savings doing this.

Biz New Orleans magazine reported the following: "A study of problem gambling released in 2002 by the Louisiana Office for Addictive Disorders estimated that the number of people in the local area who fell into the category of 'problem' or 'pathological' gambler could be above 50,000. More recent information from the office shows that a statewide gambler's 'helpline' received almost 49,000 calls in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2004. About 6,500 persons in the local area received screening for gambling disorders in that period, up more than 40 percent from the previous year."

As in other parts of the U.S., gambling is an addictive plague that is spreading from household to house-

hold in the South, ripping apart marriages and families.

Poverty and Crime—an Endless Cycle

New Orleans is comprised of roughly 485,000 residents, with an astonishing 28 percent living at or below the poverty level! It is sometimes called a "checkerboard city," for one can walk through a block of stately homes and plush gardens only to find himself, one block later, in a low-rent projects complex—a ghetto reminiscent of a war-ravaged third world village. Even the police hesitate to enter.

There, little children are being reared in fatherless homes, where residents have subsisted on welfare for three and four generations. In 2003, the local murder per capita rate was nearly eight times higher than the national average—and robbery was nearly double that rate! In an environment of brazenly open drug deals and drive-by shootings, many youth have seen more dead bodies lying in the streets of New Orleans than soldiers have seen in combat.

In these ghettos, being released from prison is given more value than academic achievement! It is little wonder that the New Orleans public school system is among the worst in the nation. Violence at school, violence in the streets and, often, violence at home conditions young children and teens to settle for lower standards.

Young minds are daily being fed real-life images of abject poverty and brutal—and often unsolved—crimes. And, because this is all they will have been exposed to, today's youths are growing up believing that all this is normal! Someday, this will become the next generation that will perpetuate the same endless cycle of despair.

Sin and Righteousness

For a city so steeped in paganism, sexual immorality, gambling, excessive drinking and other vices, New Orleans does not lack churches that call themselves "Christian."

This world's Christianity talks about "Jesus" and "love" and "giving your hearts to the Lord"—but what IS love? How does the Bible define it?

Notice: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, *that we keep His commandments*: and His commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:2-3).

How many televangelists have you heard quote this? How many preach Romans 13:8-10 and explain to their audiences that "love is the fulfilling of the law"—the *Ten Commandments*?

Once in a great while, a preacher *might* speak about sin, saying that "sin is bad" and that "Christians should avoid sin." Yet, how many ever teach that the Bible explains exactly what sin IS: "For sin is the *transgression* of the LAW" (I John 3:4) and "All *unrighteousness* is sin" (5:17)?

The world's religionists and theologians will read aloud what the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 6:14—"for sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace"—and conclude that God's Law is "done away."

However, they will conveniently ignore verses 15 to 16: "What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? *God forbid*. Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness?"

What is "righteousness"? Here is the Bible definition: "...for all Your *commandments* are righteousness" (Psa. 119:172). The Ten Commandments are "righteousness"! No wonder Paul called God's Law "holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12).

Yet, churchgoers never hear this from the pulpits of mainstream Christianity. And we will no doubt be called "intolerant" and even "hateful," simply because we will not speak endlessly of God's "love," "mercy" and "grace." But, like any human parent, a loving God punishes His disobedient children.

A World Cut Off

The people of ancient Jerusalem were convinced that God would not utterly destroy their city, for the sake of

His temple (Jer. 7:1-5). Using this as license to sin, their religious leaders portrayed a pretense of worshipping the Eternal, but secretly served other gods (Ezek. 8).

Like their ancient counterparts, modern religious leaders of traditional Christianity do not distinguish right from wrong, good from evil: "Her priests have violated My law, and have profaned My holy things: they have put no difference between the *holy* and *profane*, neither have they showed difference between the *unclean* and the *clean*, and have hid their eyes from My Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them" (Ezek. 22:26).

Instead, they teach that God's Law is no longer in effect. People in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi are crying out in anguish to a God they have never known. Their churches and denominations never taught them Isaiah 59: "But your iniquities [lawlessness] have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (vs. 2).

Gambling, drunkenness, pagan celebrations, spiritism, sexual immorality and crime are not unique to New Orleans. Like a cancerous disease, these and many other sins plague America, Britain, Canada and every other Western nation.

Wise King Solomon wrote, "Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

How true today!

An Unpopular Message

Just before ancient Israel was about to enter the Promised Land, Moses reminded the people that their success hinged on whether they faithfully kept God's laws. Notice: "And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. *And it shall be our righteousness*, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us" (Deut. 6:24-25).

God further gave Israel this warning: "See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command you this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the LORD your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it.

"But if your heart turn away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that you shall surely perish, and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land, where you pass over Jordan to go to possess it. 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: that you may love the LORD your God, and that you may obey His voice, and that you may cleave unto Him: for He is your life, and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (30:15-20).

Psalms 106 records that, despite His abundant mercy and many acts of deliverance, the Israelites turned their backs on God. Instead, they served idols—manmade images of wood, stone and metal.

Today, people serve "idols of the heart" (Ezek. 14:3-7). In America and her sister nations of the West, covetousness reigns. Magazines, movies, television programs and commercials continually flash images designed to inspire lust—this is especially true during the Christmas season. We are a consumer nation that covets the finest and latest goods, foods, drinks and fashions. *These* are our idols, for "covetousness...is idolatry" (Col. 3:5).

Most will be tempted to reject God's warning and stubbornly continue to rebel against His Way, as did the Israelites (Ezek. 2:3-5). But God likens rebellion and stubbornness—then and now—to witchcraft and idolatry (I Sam. 15:23).

This is an unpopular message. God's servants have been (and will be) persecuted, even martyred, for preaching in the spirit of Isaiah 58: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (vs. 1). For centuries, God sent His faithful "messengers, rising up early, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place" (II Chron. 36:15). God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:21-23).

Yet, how did Israel react? Notice: "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy" (II Chron. 36:16).

These messengers have been accused of being "doomsayers" and "Jeremiads" for bringing bad news. Nonetheless, punishment is coming, no matter what scoffers might say. (See II Peter 3:3-10.)

Yet, God's servants also bring GOOD NEWS.

Message of Hope

The family unit is deteriorating. There are now more single-parent households than those headed by married couples. The national divorce rate is staggering. Teenage virgin-

ity is becoming rare, and virginity before marriage is almost unheard of. Speaking against homosexuality is considered "politically incorrect," "insensitive" and "hate speech." These and many other factors are destroying the family.

People are already talking about rebuilding in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast areas—yet, who speaks of changing one's *lifestyle*, of drawing closer to God and seeking to *obey* Him? How many understand that human beings cannot determine their own steps (Prov. 14:12)? How many will admit that they need their Creator to correct their "paths" (Jer. 10:23-24)? Will you?

One third of the Bible is prophecy, but only about ten percent of prophesied events have come to pass—leaving 90 percent of biblical prophecy yet to be fulfilled.

God's servants preached that horrific disaster would come upon Israel and Judah because of their national sins. This did happen. However, God did not do this all at once; He gradually stripped away His people's great wealth and military might, while warning them of what would come next if they did not repent.

The curses that ancient Israel suffered, which God foretold in great detail (Deut. 28) were only a type of the ultimate catastrophe—"the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7)—

that awaits the modern-day descendants of Israel, who are committing the same sins as their forefathers: idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, preaching lies in God's name, perverting justice, stealing, murder, whoremongering, drunkenness, etc. Our powerful book *AMERICA AND BRITAIN IN BIBLE PROPHECY* explains this in great detail—and that there is a way of escape!

However, just as God preserved ancient Israel and Judah through their punishment, He will also preserve the modern-day Israelites through the greatest time of tribulation just ahead.

He will make a new covenant with the remnant of His people, and will give them His Spirit. Their stubborn hearts will change. They will no longer rebel against their Creator. Then they will lead the nations around the world as a model example in the wonderful world tomorrow (Jer. 31:31-34).

A new, world-ruling government will be set up by Jesus Christ at His Return. It will teach all men the right way to live. It will finally bring an end to all wars and establish lasting peace. It will replace poverty with prosperity. It will restore true justice, fairness and integrity in place of injustice and lawlessness. This government—the kingdom of God—will lead humanity into a glorious and wonderful new age! □

JUSTICE

Continued from page 13

takes much more time. Also, evidence, investigations and court proceedings are more guarded. This slower, more secretive approach differs greatly from the U.S. system. As explained by the Dutch Ambassador, "The legal system of Aruba...differs from the U.S. system but it is as effective."

However, the U.S. system is *not* effective!

Dramatic Inconsistency

There are many examples of injustice in the legal system today. Each has its

unique faults, flaws and repercussions. These examples show that the justice system is simply not capable of rendering a fair ruling—that media attention, corrupt lawyers and judges, and a system clogged with frivolous cases mean that delays, retrials and injustice are rampant.

You may recall some of the extremely high-profile cases that have been featured in the mass media. Famous athletes, media moguls, corporate executives and even politicians have been the center of investigations—some leading to very serious charges.

Everyone should be treated equally in court. And this should include

sentencing. At times, a guilty party is made "an example," especially in high-profile trials. The law *should* be applied in a fair manner. However, moral standards are often applied to verdicts. Some criminals are given two, three or even five life sentences. One reason is to placate society, making it feel comfortable with the fiction that the individual will be imprisoned for hundreds of years! This is ridiculous. One life sentence should literally mean *for life*.

Human feelings, media pressure and cunning lawyers mean that similar crimes rarely receive the same penalty—withholding justice from both accuser and the accused!

Why No Solutions?

It may seem as though dramatic changes need to be instituted into legal systems around the world—that something *must* be done to correct the problems we have addressed. However, mankind has had 6,000 years to institute its laws, courts and systems—and has failed.

Many problems inherent in the court system today are reasons that true Christians refrain from jury duty. Fair rulings are impossible. And even if the right party is convicted, sentencing is often extremely unbalanced. The same crime can result in “a slap on the wrist” or decades in prison. It is not fair—and justice is not achieved.

Even after a conviction, there may be a long series of appeals. Notice what King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrote about slow justice: “Because sentence against an evil work is *not executed speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully *set in them to do evil*” (Ecc. 8:11). The long, drawn-out legal process actually *causes* crime to be committed. No matter how harsh the punishments, if they take years to enact, criminals will not be deterred!

This explains why severe deterrents—such as the death penalty—do not seem to work. Time passes, and people forget. This results in criminals dismissing the punishment. And, in the case of the death penalty, most criminals know they can spend their entire lives in jail without worry of actually being executed.

Why can humanity not see the problems and ills that we have described? Why does it seem unable to grasp their cause? Notice: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is *not in himself*: it is not in man...to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). Could it really be that simple? Under inspiration of the God who created the universe, the prophet Jeremiah reveals that man is simply unable “to direct his steps”—and therefore unable to govern, direct and rule nations.

But one may ask, “How did this come to be?”

Two quotes from the New Testament fully explain the cause *and* the effect.

First, the cause: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who *hold the truth in unrighteousness*; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, *they glorified Him* not as God, *neither were thankful*; but *became vain* in their imaginations, *and their foolish heart was darkened*” (Rom. 1:18-21).

Mankind has been shown that God exists. There is ample proof—if he wanted to see it. But admitting that there is a God would mean OBEYING HIM. And human nature fights this at every turn.

The result? Man has declared that he does not need his Creator—that he can “figure things out” for himself. Notice God’s view on this: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became *fools*...Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the *lusts of their own hearts*...And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a *reprobate mind*, to do those things which

are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness...covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, *murder*...deceit...*inventors of evil things*...*without understanding*, covenant breakers” (Rom. 1:22, 24, 28-31).

These passages may make the situation seem hopeless; nevertheless, there *is* a solution. We have seen that, through a series of scriptures and a look at injustice today, *mankind* is not capable of *self*-rule. However, he *was* designed to be ruled, and to learn *how* to rule.

The Bible explains that Jesus Christ will soon return to this earth. When this happens, He is going to set up a new government, administered by true Christians who are being trained today. Men’s governments understand that judges must learn to rule and judge. The same is true in God’s government.

Read our book *TOMORROW’S WONDERFUL WORLD – An Inside View!* to find out how true justice will be established worldwide.

After completing this training program, Christians will fairly execute laws and judge equitably around the world. They will see into people’s hearts, and always determine the *best* solution! In the end, the confusion that exists today will cease, and every person will receive fair, righteous justice. □

EXAMPLES OF INJUSTICE

A Florida Supreme Court struck down a four-year-old law that made it illegal for civilians to wear police or sheriff’s badges, stating that it violates their First Amendment rights. Obviously, the law was enacted to prevent people from being fooled into believing that someone is a police officer. However, that court no longer sees this as a concern.

Another amazing case was Ralph Lauren’s victory against a magazine, which he forced to change its name. As the official magazine of the U.S. Polo Association, the publishers were surprised that they could not keep the name: Polo!

When a 21-year-old Connecticut man crashed into a telephone pole during a high-speed chase, he sued the town to pay his medical bills, claiming that the police’s reactions were “reckless, unnecessary, and unwarranted.”

An appeals court acquitted a 16-year-old who shot his teacher. The court ruled that it was not the boy’s fault—it was the liability of the school board, gun distributor and the gun owner (from whom the boy stole the gun).

In September 1988, two Ohio-based carpet layers were severely burned after a 3.5 gallon container of carpet glue burst into flames when a nearby hot water heater (only inches away) turned on. They argued that words such as “flammable” and “keep away from heat” were not sufficient in warning them of the danger. They filed suit and a jury agreed, awarding the men \$8 million! □

RAISING THE BAR

How Corporations Are Competing for the Homosexual Market



With more money, and the willingness to spend it, homosexuals are being courted by America's traditionally conservative corporations. What does the future hold for this marketing shift?

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

IN AN ATTEMPT to boost their share in an increasingly fragmented and crowded consumer market, a growing number of *Fortune 500* companies are targeting the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender (GLBT) demographic.

According to most promotion experts, the GLBT community stands at four to five percent of the total U.S. population. When compared to the niche markets of racial minorities, the GLBT market segment ranks third at \$485 billion annual buying power, behind African-Americans and Hispanics, respectively. (See informational graphic.)

Numerous studies reveal that...

■ More than 60 percent of homosexuals in the U.S. are college graduates. They are twice as likely as heterosexuals to hold managerial positions, and are twice as likely to earn household incomes of more than \$250,000 annually (@Plan).

■ Homosexuals tend to have fewer dependents, leaving them with more money to spend.

■ Inclined to indulge in certain luxuries, 79 percent are willing to pay a premium for quality products and services; 94 percent go out of their way to purchase from those who advertise specifically to them, via GLBT media (@Plan; Simmons; Greenfield).

America's leaders are concluding that they can no longer ignore a \$485 billion market of 15 million consumers willing to pay more for the best.

Rewarding Brand Loyalty

American Airlines, Viacom, Procter & Gamble, Chase and IBM are among a growing number of *Fortune 500* corporations competing for the brand loyalty of this emerging niche market. However, they are learning that simply running mainstream ads in homosexual magazines is not enough. Advertisers are finding that they have to "raise the bar" and produce ads that specifically appeal to the particular cares and desires of the GLBT demographic.

Though Ford, Chrysler, Honda, Toyota and other automakers are targeting the GLBT community, Subaru was among the first to do so. When it began to court the homosexual market in 1993, only 89,607 Subarus were sold in America. Ten years later, Subaru sold 186,819. To attract same-sex couples, the car manufacturer used the advertising slogan, "Different drivers, different roads, one car."

Volkswagen of America, Inc. has perfected "gay vague" ads, in which the men appearing in them may or may not be a couple.

GMC—which has traditionally positioned its products as "tough" and "rugged"—uses product-placement to advertise its Yukon Denali on the popular television show *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*.

Avis Rent A Car promotes its "A Card," which offers incentives that appeal to the GLBT demographic, such as 20 percent off homosexual-oriented magazine subscriptions. The car rental agency also supports homosexual film festivals throughout the United States, listing them on a webpage for frequent travelers.

In one of its magazine ads, Avis portrays two middle-aged men in skiing outfits, embracing each other, with one man smiling as he receives a kiss on the cheek from the other man. The headline reads, "You're A-list to us."

Please see **MARKET**, page 29

A photograph of several large, cylindrical cooling towers of a nuclear power plant, set against a hazy, orange-tinted sky. The towers are arranged in a row, with the central one being the most prominent. The overall atmosphere is industrial and somewhat somber.

IRAN

THE NUCLEAR STAND-OFF

PART ONE: THE SEEDS OF HATE

Due to its nuclear ambitions, Iran is heading toward a showdown with the nations of the West, particularly the United States. The bitterness and resentment between these nations can be traced to events that occurred decades ago.

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

RELATIONS between Iran and the United States have been unstable for decades. Iran has been indirectly involved in numerous terrorist activities (through financial support and other resources). And the U.S. has intervened in Iranian affairs.

Following the September 11 World Trade Center attacks, Iran quietly offered support for U.S. military action in Afghanistan. In a historic gesture, then Secretary of State Colin Powell shook hands

with Iran's foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi at U.N. headquarters. It seemed as though the animosity between the countries might end.

However, on January 29, 2002, relations began to sour again. In his State of the Union address, President George W. Bush said that Iran and its "terrorist allies" are part of "an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world." Two days later, then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice announced, "Iran's direct support of regional and global terrorism and its aggressive efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction,

belie any good intentions it displayed in the days after the world's worst terrorist attacks in history" (*PBS Frontline*).

Iran's current geopolitical situation is rooted in the country's recent checkered past.

A Different Regime

Before the 1979 Iranian revolution, Iran existed as an autocratic, pro-West monarchy. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ruled as Shah (the title of the hereditary monarch) from 1941 until 1979. There was a brief interruption in 1953, when he was forced to flee the country. The Shah was reinstated as Iran's leader with the aid of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. The operation was code-named "Ajax."

The first stage of the revolution was an alliance of liberal, leftist and religious groups, who banded together to overthrow the Shah. The second stage, often referred to as the Islamic

Revolution, was the rise to power of the ayatollahs (high-ranking Shiite leaders).

Though the Shah maintained good relations with the American government, his policies conflicted with traditional Muslim views on alcohol, gambling and premarital sex, all of which he refused to ban. He faced continual opposition from religious figures (who were generally poor) and the urban middle-class—who did not benefit from his extravagant lifestyle.

One such example that contributed to their disdain for the Shah occurred in 1971. During a three-day party in recognition of the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire, \$300 million was spent on festivities, including more than one ton of caviar prepared by 200-plus chefs who were flown in from France. Ironically, thousands of Iranian citizens went without food.

The poor and middle-class opposed the Shah's efforts to bring about modernization. In effect, they opposed being westernized. Instead, they yearned for a return to the Islamic lifestyle, which is at odds with the decadent lifestyle now found in every western country. The Shah's reforms were viewed as self-serving, and his march toward supposed progress was seen as a lie, based on the huge gap between the rich and the poor.

In the early 1960s, opposition began to take shape, with Ayatollah Khomeini as leader. He claimed that the Shah's reign was tyrannical, and was exiled for his opposing views. When the Ayatollah's followers rioted, the Shah responded by arresting and executing those who took part.

Later that decade, Iran's economy started to boom, as the value of oil and steel exports rose considerably. While the leaders in the Shah's regime benefited, as well as did those involved with western companies, the lives of the middle-class and poor failed to improve.

During the 1970s, a rise in oil prices widened the gap between rich and poor, which added more pressure for change in government policies.

As many citizens fled Iran, others organized in mosques and listened to sermons condemning "Western wickedness" and "indulgence."

In the face of increasing opposition from religious leaders, the Shah introduced extreme measures to limit the role of Islam in his kingdom, such as abolishing the lunar calendar in 1976 and censoring Muslim publications. He also eliminated the feudal system, causing the dissolution of property owned by Shia clergy; this fueled intense anger. The Shah's goal was to promote the achievements of the pre-Islamic Persian civilization.

In response to pressure from U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Iran freed more than 300 political prisoners, relaxed censorship laws and reformed the court system in 1977. Many small groups seized this opportunity to voice their opinion, as writers were able to freely declare their anti-government views.

A Revolution

In early 1978, Iran's official press published a defamatory story about Ayatollah Khomeini, sparking protests by students and religious leaders. The army ended the demonstration, killing several students.

In accordance with Shiite customs, a memorial service was held forty days after the incident on February 18. In conjunction, groups in various cities marched in protest of the Shah's rule—and more than 100 demonstrators were killed in one city. One month later, more protests erupted across the nation. Symbols of the Shah's reign, such as luxury hotels and theaters that showed "unethical movies," were destroyed. Security forces intervened, killing many protesters.

Iran was quickly imploding. Its economy took a severe beating due to the protests and inflation. The government suspended many public works projects and imposed wage freezes, which led to widespread unemployment and labor problems.

September 1978 was the beginning of the end of the Shah's reign.

With major protests occurring regularly, the Shah introduced martial law and prohibited all demonstrations.

On September 8, in response to an overwhelming protest, the government unleashed tanks, helicopters and machine guns upon the protesters. This day, now known as Black Friday, embittered more of Iran's population toward the government.

Then, in December, the crisis began to reach a final boiling point, as hundreds of protesters were killed each day. In spite of this, demonstrations increased. The army began to collapse—soldiers refused to open fire upon the protesters, instead killing their officers and taking control of military bases.

In a desperate measure, the Shah agreed to institute a constitution—but it was too late. The majority of Iranians were now loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah was forced to flee Iran in January 1979.

After ousting the monarchy, much disagreement ensued over how and by whom Iran should be governed. Liberal, secularist, Marxist, anarchist and religious groups were eager to take control of the country.

Initially, two groups were in control: A liberal secular group named the Freedom Movement and an Islamic Republic party comprised of clerics led by the Ayatollah. Tension abounded between the two groups.

In June 1979, the Freedom Movement introduced a draft constitution that declared Iran an Islamic Republic. However, the constitution failed to give precedence to Islamic law. When it was sent to the legislature, which was dominated by supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini, it was rejected.

Eventually, a new constitution was drafted, based solely on Islamic law. The extremely powerful post of Supreme Leader was instituted and given to Ayatollah Khomeini. He became the Head of State for life and later became the "Supreme Spiritual Leader." Only two people have held this office, with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei currently in command.

Opposition

Iranian resentment toward the United States increased toward the end of the revolution, as it continued to aid counter-revolutionary activity, including support for the overthrown monarch. When the White House accepted the Shah into the country for cancer treatment, supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini took hostages at the U.S. embassy in Tehran. The Iranian hostage crisis, in which 53 American

hostages were held for 444 days, sent a clear message: Iran was able to defy the United States of America.

Iran's surrounding nations disapproved of the revolution, fearing that such an event might occur in their countries as well. As a result, in an attempt to end the revolution in its beginning stages, Iraq invaded Iran in 1980. It received significant backing from the U.S., which supplied Iraq with intelligence, economic aid and weapons.

During the war, Iraqi-leader Saddam Hussein unleashed chemical and biological weapons upon Iran. Thousands died instantly; thousands more receive regular medical treatment to this day. (Iran has sustained greater damage from biological/chemical/nuclear weapons than any country except Japan.) Iran blames the West for aiding Iraq.

In April 1988, an Iranian mine severely damaged an American missile frigate. This spurred the Navy to launch its largest engagement of warships since World War II. During the operation, a U.S. warship accidentally shot down an Iranian passenger jet.

The Iran-Iraq war lasted more than eight years, and failed to bring about any changes in Iran. One thing it did accomplish, however, was to fuel increased hatred toward the United States. In the face of the external threat, Iranians rallied around their new leadership, and past differences were all but forgotten.

■ **1979 IRANIAN HOSTAGE CRISIS:** Marine Corporal Steve Kirtley, age 21, was one of 53 hostages held in Tehran, Iran, for 444 days.

PHOTO: U.S. Marine Corps



■ **MAY 2001:** Major Kirtley hugs a friend after receiving a Prisoner of War medal.

PHOTO: U.S. Marine Corps

Terrorist Ties

In "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001," the U.S. State Department reported that Iran is "the most active state sponsor of terrorism," and indicted the nation as abetting terrorist groups Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad (a wing of Hezbollah) and Hamas. According to the U.S., Hezbollah is responsible for attacks against various American targets, including bombing the U.S. Embassy and Marine Barracks in Beirut in 1983; bombing the U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut in 1984; and helping the Saudi Arabian branch carry out the bombing of the Khobar Towers in 1996, in which 19 American military personnel were killed.

Hezbollah has also been accused of helping to fuel the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank. American and Israeli intelligence have indicated that the mastermind of the Marine Barracks bombings was sent to assist the Palestinians in their cause against Israel in September 2000.

The *New York Times* reports, "Israel and American officials believe that



■ **25TH ANNUAL TRIBUTE:** Army Pfc. John Brothers stands by to present a wreath at Arlington Cemetery, Va., during the 25th Annual Tribute to the Iran Hostage Rescue Mission on April 25, 2005. The tribute honored the eight men who died in the failed rescue mission to free 53 American hostages from Tehran, Iran, on April 25, 1980.

PHOTO: U.S. Air Force

the 18-year struggle by Hezbollah in Lebanon, backed by tens of millions of dollars worth of arms from Iran, provided a model for what Tehran would like to recreate on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. 'The strategy is to make the West Bank another Lebanon,' said one senior American intelligence official."

Iran has denied any involvement in terrorist activities. Of course, what the U.S. views as terrorism, Iran may view differently. For example, Iran's ambassador to Canada stated, "We never have supported any groups which take act of terrorism. We have morally supported groups who are fighting for their independence or for their being out of occupations, like Hezbollah... Terrorism is a menace of this world. We are against terrorism. We differentiate between terrorist acts [and] those legitimate rights of people who had been or are under occupation" (ibid.).

More recently, Iran is thought to be playing a role in the opposition to America's presence in Afghanistan, which Iran might view as a threat to its interests in the area. U.S. and Afghan officials have stated that Iran shipped food, clothing, weapons, money and Revolutionary Guard troops to western

Afghanistan. This contradicts Iran's quiet support of the U.S. campaign, in which it has given safe passage for humanitarian aid and agreed to conduct search-and-rescue operations if American pilots were downed in its territory.

One particular Afghan warlord is said to have received support from Iran. A *Washington Post* article stated, "[Ismail] Khan's long ties with Iran have led to allegations that he is a conduit for Iranian arms and influence that could keep Afghanistan unstable. Khan denies it... Yet there are persistent reports of Iranian arms coming to Herat. One military officer insists that a small private army of 320 Iranian-trained fighters under Khan's personal command called the Sopah e-Mohammad, or Soldiers of Mohammad, is secreted around three bases in town."

It is also reported that Iran is providing sanctuaries within its borders. The infamous Abu Musaab Zarqawi is said to have found refuge there. The *New York Times* reported that, earlier in 2005, he "fled the western Afghan city of Herat after the American military campaign began [and] has turned up in Tehran under the protection of

Iranian security forces, according to senior Israeli and American officials." Of course, Iran has denied such allegations.

However, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has said, "We have any number of reports that Iran has been permissive and allowed transit through their country of al Qaeda."

Recent Rumbings

Adding to the animosity that the U.S. and Iran have for each other, Iran has decided to resume uranium enrichment activities—in spite of international demands. In response, President Bush stated that, if Iran does not comply with such demands, "All options are on the table."

Could Iran be heading toward a military showdown with the United States—or possibly Israel, America's close ally? What alliances does Iran have with other countries that could threaten Western interests? And what effect will Iran's new president, Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, have in today's nuclear stand-off?

In part two, we will examine these questions and the latest controversy surrounding Iran's possible pursuit of nuclear weapons. □

IRAN'S GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Iran's government is an Islamic theocratic democracy; yet, in many ways, it resembles the U.S. government. Both have an executive branch headed by an elected president, a legislative branch and a powerful judiciary.

Of course, there are also many differences. Iran's Supreme Leader is in charge of outlining and supervising "the general policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran." He is the commander-in-chief of the military, and controls intelligence and security forces. (Iran is the only country in which the executive branch

does not control the military.) He has the authority to appoint and dismiss judiciary leaders, radio and television network leaders, and the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard. He can even deny candidates from running for office.

The president is under the Supreme Leader. Though this person occupies a high public profile, his power is limited by Iran's constitution. For instance, unlike the U.S., Iran's president is not in charge of the executive branch of the government (the Supreme Leader is). His main responsibility is

setting the economic policies of the country.

Other branches of the government include the Parliament (similar to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives), Assembly of Experts (comprised of "virtuous and learned" clerics), Council of Guardians (determines if laws passed by Parliament are compatible with the constitution and Islamic law), the judiciary (similar to the U.S. judicial branch) and the National Security and Intelligence (comprised of the Supreme National Security Council, the army, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard, and

the Ministry of Intelligence and Security).

Often, disputes between the Parliament and the Council of Guardians reach the point of stalemate. To combat this, in 1988, Ayatollah Khomeini created the Expediency Council. Its purpose is to mediate disagreements between the two branches of government.

In his 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush called for a reform of the Expediency Council. He denounced this body as the "unelected few" who oppress those with democratic aspirations.

Source: *PBS Frontline*

Poll Reveals Most Believe God Exists

But Can It Be Proven?

Sixty-four percent of Americans believe they were created by God. Can this be proven? If so, *why* did God create human beings?

BY RYAN P. DENECE

A JUNE 2005 Harris Poll asked this question: Which of the following do you believe about how human beings came to be? (A) Human beings evolved from earlier species. (B) Human beings were created directly by God. (C) Human beings are so complex that they required a powerful force or intelligent being to help create them. (D) Not sure/Decline to answer.

The results are very telling: 64 percent of respondents chose “B,” agreeing that human beings were created by God.

It is interesting that so many believe they were created by God. But do they base their belief on “faith”—or have they proven beyond all reasonable doubt that God exists?

And if the existence of a creator God can be proven, then *why* did He create mankind? Why was man born?

Is God Our Creator?

Consider the earth and the many specific requirements for life to exist. Our planet must be the right distance from the sun—too close would incinerate all life; too far would freeze all life.

Look at the balance of the elements in the air we breathe. If oxygen content were at a higher level, there would be an explosion every time a match was struck. The placement of the moon, the thickness of the earth’s crust, the size of the earth—these and many other variables must be in line to sustain life on earth. Some might argue that if the “right” conditions exist, life would “naturally” result. But is this likely?

Astrophysicist Dr. Hugh Ross, author of the book *The Genesis Question*, calculated the odds of having 123 variables come together in the right amount for life and the earth to exist. The answer to this equation: one chance in 10 to the 139th power! In other words, there is *no chance* of this ever happening without God.

There is a concept called “irreducible complexity.” It describes a system that cannot have any part removed and still function correctly. A common household example of this is the mouse trap; take any part away and it will fail.

There are many examples of this in nature as well, such as the proteins that work together to make the cilia in our lungs sweep mucus toward the throat for elimination. Take just one of the proteins away, and the cilia will no longer work. Other examples are the retina in the human eye and an Australian termite that is actually four creatures in one. All systems cited here could not have “come together” gradually—irreducible complexity demands they had to be designed and created in full function to *ever* work.

These are only some of many examples proving God’s existence. For further proof, read our booklet *Does God Exist?*

God’s Purpose for Mankind

If man were created, then there must be a *reason* why he exists. What purpose does God have for humanity? Why were we born?

The Bible reveals that God created birds, cattle and all other animals after their own “kind” (Gen. 1:24-25). Yet, God created man after the *God* kind: “And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness...So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He them” (vs. 26-27).

Please see **BELIEVE**, page 29

The REAL TRUTH



PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

Studies show that the average person becomes happier after marriage. This increase has actually been measured, with these studies showing that, no matter the person's prior level of happiness, it receives at least a small boost.

Verses 19 and 20 describe Adam looking at all the animals God had created and finding none suitable for him. So, in verse 21, God put him to sleep, took a rib from his side, closed it up and created the woman: "And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made [Hebrew: "builded"] He a woman, and brought her unto the man" (vs. 22).

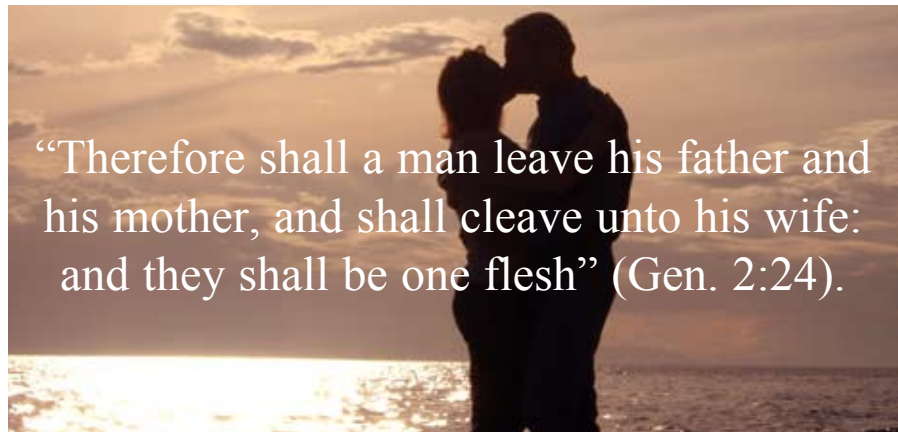
Now notice verse 23. Adam realized that the woman was literally part of him—that she had come *from him*: "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Here is God's first recorded instruction about the marriage institution. Next, He tells Adam and Eve what to do, once married: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (vs. 24-25).

Married couples are to live together, forming a *new* household, apart from their parents. The reference to "and they shall be one flesh," is a picture of sexual relations within marriage. The verse is explaining where sexual relations belong—*within* marriage!

This account establishes marriage as God-ordained! This institution was created, designed, and presented to the first human couple—Adam and Eve—as the way God intended the two sexes to live together.

Now notice this passage in Ecclesiastes. Solomon, the wisest man of all time, describes why the joining of two people is better than one alone: "Two are better than one; because they



have a good reward for their labor" (4:9).

Verse 10 continues to explain the advantages of being married: "For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falls; for he has not another to help him up." Now notice verse 11: "Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?"

Verse 12 adds, "And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." Notice the phrase "and a *threefold* cord is not quickly broken." This establishes the minimum number to be a family. One child makes any couple "threefold." To be a rope—a "cord"—a minimum of three strands is required, making it possible to weave them together. Each *additional* child further strengthens the marriage, makes the rope stronger, binds the family, making it harder for a couple to break up. God explains that producing a family is central to marriage. Adam and Eve had been told, "be fruitful, and multiply" (Gen. 1:28).

The Husband's Responsibility

The most important New Testament passage about marriage and the specific role of husbands and wives is Ephesians 5:22-33. This passage describes the most fundamental understanding each partner must bring to the marriage.

Beginning in verse 25, God describes, through Paul, instruction to the husband: "Husbands, *love your wives*, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." This

emphasizes the importance of husbands showing a real, sincere, deep love for their wives!

The husband's first and greatest responsibility is to unfailingly love his wife! Initially, many husbands try to do this, but their effort wanes over time. Men often begin to take their wives for granted, not realizing they are to love them "as Christ loved the Church." This is the extremely high standard God sets—an unending, boundless love, paralleling the way Christ cares about His bride, the Church. Christ never gives up on the Church, but rather forgives, understands, is patient with, tolerates and works with His wife-to-be.

The next several verses describe *how* Christ works with the Church—how a husband should treat his wife. This example culminates in verses 28-29 with this instruction: "So ought men to *love their wives* as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even *as the Lord the church*."

These are powerful words, especially the end of verse 29. They show an undying, never-ending, outgoing concern for the wife on the part of the husband. He is to love her as much as he loves himself. That is a tall order, but it is a reflection of the fact that the first woman (as a type of all women) literally came from a man—from his flesh.

Verses 30-31 speak directly of Genesis 2. Here, Paul explains that his instruction about marriage derives directly from the passage we have

already read. The New Testament supports the Old. Notice: “For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”

Now read verse 33. It summarizes the husband’s role and introduces the most important aspect of the wife’s role, what *she* must understand in the marriage: “Nevertheless let everyone of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence [respect] her husband.”

The Wife’s Responsibility

What about wives? What is the most important aspect—responsibility—that God requires her to perform in marriage? Let’s now read the most crucial obligation for wives. Few married couples understand this great point.

Notice verse 22: “Wives, *submit yourselves* unto your own husbands, *as unto the Lord*.” Society has completely reversed, even denigrated, what we are reading from the pages of the Bible. Yet, this is what God, as the Author of marriage and what makes it work, requires of the woman.

Most women are taught today that they are equal in authority to their husband. Certainly women *are* equal before God as human beings. Men are not more important or better than women. But God places the man in charge of the marriage. This verse is plain.

The typical marriage counselor scorns this principle, seeing it as archaic, out-of-date, out-of-step. Very few brides-to-be enter marriage having been taught anything about being subject to their husband’s loving authority. Most would ridicule and outright reject this idea!

Some years ago, I performed a wedding where almost none of the audience was familiar with Ephesians 5. During the ceremony, as this and related scriptures were read, the wife vowed to submit herself—be subject—to her husband. We heard snickering from a number of the more “sophisticated” women in the audience. Afterwards, several approached the bride, kidding

her and asking her if she “really meant it” or if it was “just for the ceremony?”

Virtually all were hoping that she did *not* really mean what she said—that it was mere formality. A couple of the women actually approached me about how “novel” and “sweet” it was that some women could still think this way. Of course, the implication in their voices was that it would certainly never be this way in *their* marriages.

What was most astonishing was perhaps not that these women disagreed with wives submitting to their husbands, but rather that they viewed the exchange of *solemn vows* to God’s command as little more than a formality—a statement made for show!

No wonder so many marriages do not last even five years. While all couples want to be happy, almost none follow God’s formula for achieving it. Then they wonder why they are miserable!

Parallel of Christ and the Church

Now notice the next two verses in Ephesians 5: “For the husband is the *head* of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands *in everything*” (vs. 23-24).

This passage is also most clear. Not only is the husband the head of the wife—her leader—but, as with how the husband loves his wife, this also parallels the way Christ heads the Church. Certainly, the Church is not *equal* in authority with Christ. All who believe this verse must recognize that the woman is under her husband’s authority.

God leaves no doubt that the husband is the leader—pacesetter—in the home. His *example* must stand out as a *leader*—not just as one who is “in charge,” throwing his weight around, saying, “I’m the boss!” Remember, he is to *love* his wife. His leadership, as head of the home, must reflect God’s love. But the woman must submit herself to him. No man can lead a woman who will not yield to his authority.

Remember, verse 24 revealed that

the woman is subject unto her own husband “as the church is subject unto Christ.” This leaves no room for both partners being in charge.

Try telling the owner or CEO of a company that his employees should have an equal say in decisions—or a President or Prime Minister that the citizenry should be able to overrule his government—or a football coach that his players should be able to take over the team whenever they see fit.

In every organization, institution, company, football team, nation, military branch or other entity, someone has to ultimately be in charge. The governments and organizations of this world all recognize this. No one would consider joining a football team where all the players were equal with the coach. That would bring chaos—and probably every game would end in defeat.

Why, then, cannot millions of people recognize that *marriage* is no different—that the most basic unit of all societies, the *family*, must have a final decision-maker? Someone must be in charge! As children appear in the family, they must know who is the leader and who is the assistant. In Genesis, God had said that the woman was the “help” to the man—she was his assistant, and was made “suitable” for him as an assistant.

Understand that this overall pattern for marriage must be accepted as God’s blueprint—the fundamental *starting point* for a marriage to have any hope of success. Again, the marriage “experts” and even the ministers of this world disagree. The terrible fruits of their instruction, that men and women are equals—*both* in charge—prove they do not know what they are talking about! Because most do not examine God’s Word to see this pattern explained, divorce is exploding in most of the countries and cultures of the world.

What you have read lays a solid foundation in understanding how to achieve true and lasting happiness in marriage. To learn much more, read our booklet *You Can Build a Happy MARRIAGE*. □

WORLD NEWS DESK

AN EDITORIAL ANALYSIS OF WORLD NEWS, TRENDS AND CONDITIONS



WEATHER

DROUGHT IN THE U.S. MIDWEST

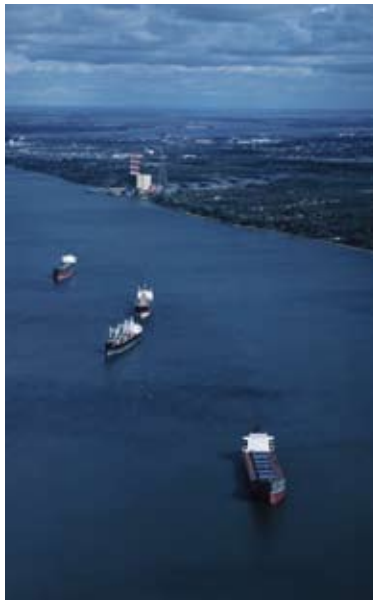
The worst drought to hit the U.S. Midwest since 1988 continues, with a seven-mile stretch of the Ohio River (north of its intersection with the Mississippi River) closed recently due to low water levels. Parts of both rivers have become virtual sandbars, delaying commercial traffic and construction projects in the area.

In addition, higher transportation costs could possibly make agricultural products too expensive for some international markets.

The drought has primarily affected parts of Illinois, Missouri and Wisconsin, drying up wells, causing insect infestations and devastating crop production. A government report confirmed that corn production in Illinois (second biggest producer after Iowa) would be down 12 percent this year from 2004's record. In fact, the U.S. Department of Agriculture expects corn yields to be lower this year in 29 of 33 producing states. Soybean yields are also lower this year.

Can the U.S. economy afford such significant drops in agriculture production? This comes at a time when American car companies are being decimated by foreign competitors, debt levels remain at an all-time high, and the price of oil continues to rise.

Source: *The New York Times*; *Drought Monitor*



HEALTH, SCIENCE & SOCIETY

BIRD FLU SPREADS TO EUROPE'S DOORS

Reports of the avian flu on the eastern side of the Ural Mountains (which separate Europe from Asia) have raised concern, although the outbreak has not been confirmed to be the deadly H5N1 strain.

Roads were cordoned off in parts of Siberia, as hundreds of chickens were slaughtered in an attempt to control the spread of the virus.

However, Gennadi Onishchenko, Russia's top state epidemiologist, predicted that the virus would soon spread to Russia's agriculture regions of Krasnodar, Stavropol and Rostov in the south; and then to the Middle East and the Mediterranean: "An analysis of bird migration routes has shown that in autumn 2005 the H5N1 virus may be spread from Western Siberia to the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Apart from Russia's south, migrating birds may spread the virus to nearby countries [Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Georgia, Ukraine, and Mediterranean countries] because bird migration routes from Siberia also go through those regions in autumn."

Officials are concerned that the H5N1 strain could mutate into a form that is easily transmissible between humans, thus creating a scenario that may be similar to the 1918-19 Spanish flu, in which 20-40 million people died.

Source: *The Times* (London)



GEOPOLITICS, STRATEGIES & ECONOMIES

PALESTINIANS REJOICE OVER GAZA PULL-OUT

Disturbing images emerged from Israel, as Israeli soldiers enforced their government's orders to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

As the last settlements were being cleared out, Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas referred to "great joy" and the "fruit of Palestinian sacrifice," but most importantly that Gaza is only the beginning: "This step is only the first step that will be completed in Jenin and in the West Bank and in Jerusalem, God willing."

To date, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has remained defiant regarding those areas, even stating that settlements would be expanded.

More troubling is the statement made by Hamas' leader in Lebanon,



Osama Hamdan, at a rally attended by local members of parliament, representatives of Hezbollah and various Palestinian factions. He stated that the resistance would continue until all of Palestine—including Jerusalem—is "liberated," and that this was the only

way (as opposed to negotiating) to succeed.

Will the pullout expand to the West Bank and Jerusalem, or will Israel draw a firm line in the sand? Will Mr. Sharon remain as Prime Minister? If not, what position will his successor take (e.g., former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who recently resigned from the government in protest of the Gaza pullout)?

More than likely, the issue will eventually come to Jerusalem, and then, in the desperation of a crisis, who will broker a deal between the Jews and the Muslims? Europe? The pope?

Source: *The Daily Star* (Lebanon); *AFP*

SOCIETY AND LIFESTYLES

65 GIRLS AT OHIO SCHOOL ARE PREGNANT

Ohio newspaper the *Canton Repository* reported that 65 out of 490 female students—13 percent—at a Canton high school are pregnant.

Each year, 10 percent of American females ages 15-19 become pregnant; most of these births are among 18 and 19 year-olds. According to the Canton City Health Department, 104 of 586 babies born to Canton residents in the county's two largest hospitals had mothers between ages 11 and 19.

Rick Senften, the newspaper's special projects editor, wrote, "Whose fault is it that more than 13 percent of Timken's girls are with child? Some would say fault-finding isn't a fruitful exercise, but in this case, it's critical. Suspects range from movies, TV and video games to lazy parents and lax discipline. Only one thing is sure: Schools don't impregnate children."

"A lot of factors enter into a school district's ability to succeed, but none is more important than home environment. Even smart kids struggle when their parents don't establish expectations for academic achievement and responsible behavior. Teen moms will, in time, almost surely fill this lethargic parenting description, their pregnancies evidence of faulty priorities.

"What chance does a pregnant girl have to meet education goals when she finds herself focusing on everything from peer attention to morning sickness, misses classes regularly and, finally, is on maternity leave? Many never return to school. If they do, they're far behind.

"At home, they face mounting tensions created by the unplanned child-rearing responsibilities they've left with their own parents or grandparents. This persuades some to quit, and to plan on a GED. Sometimes that plan is realized; often it's not.

"Not surprisingly, few get to college, educators say."

Source: *Canton Repository*; *NewsNet5*; *WorldNetDaily*



ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

YOUTH IN "ABSOLUTE POVERTY"

Plan, a child aid organization, released a new 55-page report, *Growing up in Asia*, stating, "Despite Asia's booming economy 600 million children—almost half the region's 1.25 billion under-18s—are severely deprived of basic needs such as food, healthcare and shelter...And over 350 million Asian children live in absolute poverty..."

The reason given is that half of Asia's families are not benefiting from economic growth and globalization, largely due to the pressure of population growth on scarce resources; lack of access to education, healthcare, clean water and sanitation; caste discrimination and dominance by social elites; and weak governments and corruption.

About 80% of India's 400 million youth are considered "severely deprived"; 60% are "absolutely poor"; almost half of those under five are malnourished.

Source: *Plan*; *BBC News*

NORTH AMERICA

"MAJORITY-MINORITY"

Texas just became the fourth state in which non-Hispanic whites make up less than 50% of the residents, preceded by California, New Mexico and Hawaii.

This has sparked renewed discussions about whether the term "minority" still applies: "Soon, more than one-third of Americans will live in states where Latinos, blacks, Asians, American Indians and other ethnic groups will outnumber whites. Such shifts have given rise to the term 'majority-minority.'"

Source: *Associated Press*

MARKET

Continued from page 19

The copy announces that Avis has automatically included domestic partners as additional drivers for more than a decade—“No extra fees charged, no questions asked.”

The American Automobile Association (AAA) published a magazine ad that showed two couples driving in a convertible, with their arms raised, under the headline, “We’re out there with you.” The ad copy reads, “We have a long and proud tradition of supporting the LGBT community. AAA offers a wide range of products created especially with you in mind. AAA Travel’s 58 dedicated Vacation Specialists are committed to serving your interests and can plan lesbian- and gay-friendly vacations, and trips with family and friends. We also offer Insurance products, 24/7 Emergency Road Service and Membership benefits for you and your partner.”

In one of its advertisements, Atlantis Cruises showed six muscular young men lying in lawn chairs on the deck of a cruise ship. The headline read, “Our kind of family vacation.” Below, the ad announced that its “new all-gay cruises for 2006 are just what you and your friends are looking

U.S. CONSUMER NICHE MARKETS (2003)

Demographic	Population	Buying Power
Black	36 million	\$688 billion
Hispanic	41 million	\$653 billion
Homosexual	15 million	\$485 billion
Asian	12 million	\$344 billion

Source: Sedig Center; U.S. Census 2003; PlanetOut; Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc.; MarketResearch.com

for... More gay and lesbian guests traveled for Atlantis in 2005 than any other company in the world. Isn’t it time you became a part of our family?”

Even politics has followed suit. For example, in 2001, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) published a full page ad listing reasons why homosexuals should vote Democrat. Since then, the DNC continues to court the homosexual vote, advertising in *Advocate* magazine, utilizing messages such as, “One out of three gay couples has children... Republicans believe they should be taken away.”

What to Expect Next

Society’s growing tolerance for the homosexual lifestyle is apparent. In 1996, only 21 *Fortune 500* companies offered domestic partner health benefits; by 2002, more than 160 did so.

Popular television programs, such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *Will & Grace* (now in its eighth season), continue to capture mainstream audiences, with little or no backlash. The California Supreme Court recently ruled that same-sex parents who separated have the same parental rights as heterosexuals. These and other trends are signs that homosexuality is on the road to becoming “the norm.”

With homosexual-specific advertising campaigns on the rise, society can expect to see GLBT-oriented television commercials in mainstream venues, such as during what was once called “the family hour.”

In a *FoxNews* report, the editor-at-large at *Advertising Age* said that it is smarter and more cost-effective to target a demographic in its specific media. “The logical first step is not to buy 30 seconds on NBC. The logical first step is to put your ad in *The Advocate*. It’s a more efficient starting point. If that works, then who knows? Maybe you take things more broadly.”

Meanwhile, as mainstream attitudes and opinions succumb to the continuous calls for “tolerance” and “understanding,” those who speak against the homosexual lifestyle will be attacked and vilified for “preaching hatred.” Such voices are already becoming a shrinking minority. □

BELIEVE

Continued from page 24

Other verses show that man will someday inherit “all things.” Notice: “But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Your hands: *You have put all things in subjection under his feet.* For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left *nothing* that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him” (Heb. 2:6-8).

“All things” means just that—the vast universe! The Weymouth transla-

tion renders verse 8 as, “You have put everything in subjection under his feet. For this subjecting of THE UNIVERSE to man...”

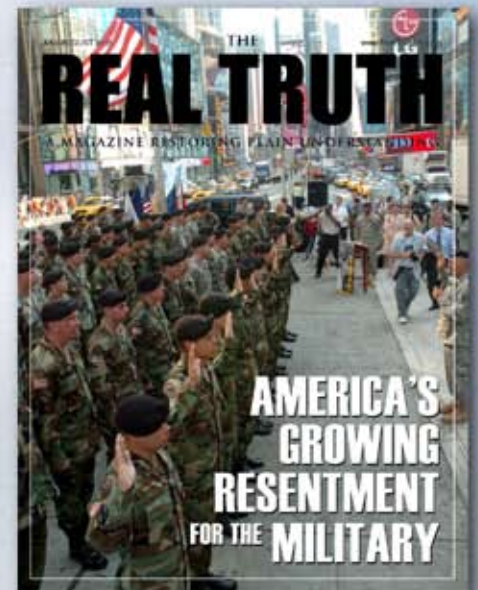
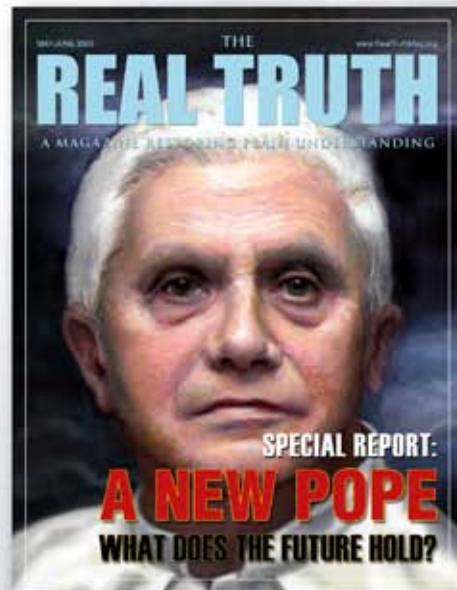
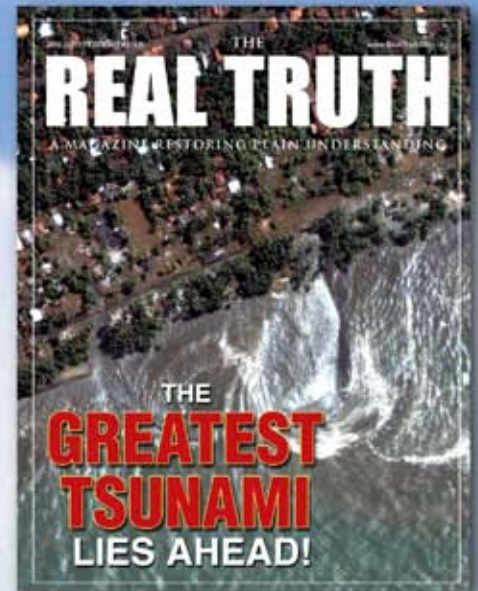
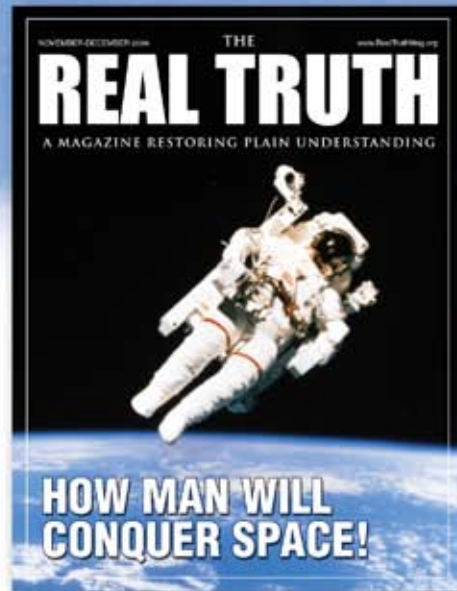
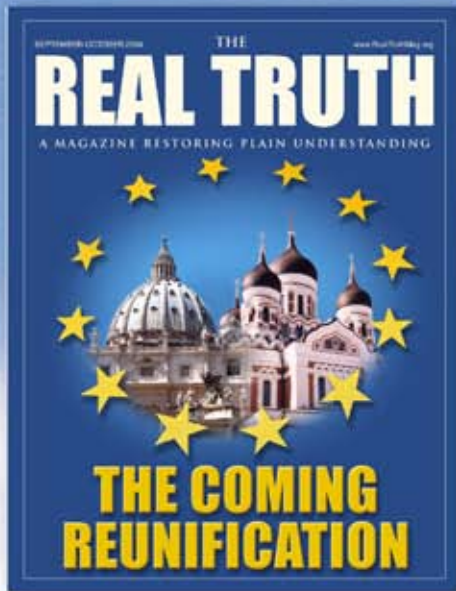
The apostle Paul gives further details in Romans 8: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the *reveling of the sons of God.* For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption [decay] into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together

until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption [sonship], the redemption of our body” (vs. 18-23, New King James).

God created man after His “kind,” intending that he inherit the physical creation. Yet, the last sentence of Hebrews 2:8 states, “But now we see *not yet* all things put under him.” *When* will mankind receive its inheritance? What are the steps necessary to inherit “all things”?

Our physical existence is just the beginning. Read our book *The AWESOME POTENTIAL of Man* to understand the wonderful and tremendous purpose that God has planned for humanity. □

Have you missed out on previous issues?



You can read them online
at your convenience!